

# GENUINENESS OF THE GOSPELS.





THE  
EVIDENCES  
OF THE  
GENUINENESS OF THE GOSPELS.

By ANDREWS NORTON.



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## EDITORIAL NOTE.

THE present edition of "The Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels" contains the whole of the original work, with the exception of such portions as might be omitted without essential injury to the force of its main argument.

The omissions chiefly consist of passages addressed rather to the scholar than to the general reader; and they have been the more readily made, from the belief that any student who might be desirous of following the author in his investigation of the subject in its more obscure, collateral developments, might, without much difficulty, obtain a copy of the work in its original form. For the information of the reader, a list of the principal omissions is hereto appended.

C. E. N



# LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL OMISSIONS IN THE PRESENT EDITION.

## ORIGINAL EDITION.—VOL. I.

NOTE. (pp. 110–126.)\* — On some opinions and arguments of Eichhorn, and other German theologians.

### ADDITIONAL NOTES.

NOTE A. (pp iii–xxxiv.) — Sect. I. Introductory statement — Sect II. On the systematic classification of the copies of the New Testament, adopted by Griesbach and others; and the language concerning the diversities among those copies with which it has been connected.

NOTE B. (pp. xcvi.iii.–ci) — Various readings of the copies of the Gospels extant in the time of Origen, which are particularly noticed by him.

NOTE C. (pp cii.–cv.) — Undisputed interpolations in manuscripts of the Gospels.

NOTE E. (pp. ccxiv–ccxxxviii) — Justin Martyr's quotations.

## VOL. II.—ADDITIONAL NOTES.

NOTE A. (pp iii–xxiii.) — On the statue which is said, by Justin Martyr and others, to have been erected at Rome to Simon Magus.

NOTE B. (pp. xxiv–xxxvi.) — On the Clementine Homilies.

NOTE C. (pp. xxxvii–xlvi.) — On the false charges brought against the heretics, particularly by the later fathers.

NOTE D (pp. xlvii.–cciv.) — On the Jewish dispensation, the Pentateuch, and the other books of the Old Testament.

\* The paging referred to is that of the second edition: Cambridge, 1848.

## VOL. III

CHAP. VII. (pp. 3-66.) — On the system of the Gnostics, as intended for a solution of the existence of evil in the world.

CHAP. VIII. (pp. 67-168.) — On the peculiar speculations of the theosophic Gnostics.

CHAP. IX. (pp. 169-181) — On the opinions of the Gnostics concerning the person of Christ.

CHAP. X. (pp. 182-186.) — On the opinions of the Gnostics respecting the design of Christianity.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES.

NOTE A. (pp. iii.-xxxv.) — On the distinction made by the ancients between things *intelligible* and things *sensible*; on the use of the terms *spiritual* and *material* as applied to their speculations; and on the nature of matter.

NOTE B. (pp. xxxvi.-xlv.) — On Basilides and the Basilidians.

NOTE C. (pp. xlvi.-lx.) — On the Gospel of Marcion.

NOTE D. (pp. lxi.-lxxvii.) — On the use of the words *Θεός* and *Deus*.

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# INTRODUCTION.

## STATEMENT OF THE CASE.

THE object of the following work is to prove the genuineness of the Gospels. In asserting their genuineness, I mean to be understood as affirming, that they remain essentially the same as they were originally written; and that they have been ascribed to their true authors. The ground which has been taken by those who have denied their genuineness, as thus explained, may appear from the following statements.

The Gospels are quoted, as the undoubted works of the authors to whom they are ascribed, by an unbroken series of Christian writers, reaching back to the latter part of the second century; or, in other words, to the time of Irenæus, who wrote in the last quarter of that century. But it is affirmed, that beyond his time the testimony to their genuineness fails. As we ascend to a remoter period, we come to the writings of Justin Martyr, who flourished about the middle of the second century; and to those ascribed to Apostolic Fathers, or supposed contemporaries of the Apostles. It has been affirmed, that these writings, though they are commonly quoted for the purpose, afford no evidence that our present Gospels were known to their authors. In regard to the writings attributed to Apostolic Fathers, the remark is not new. It was made, for instance, by Bolingbroke, who, in

his "Letters on the Study of History," has the following passage:—

"Writers copy one another; and the mistake that was committed, or the falsehood that was invented by one, is adopted by hundreds.

"Abbadie says, in his famous book, that the gospel of St. Matthew is cited by Clemens, Bishop of Rome, a disciple of the apostles; that Barnabas cites it in his epistle; that Ignatius and Polycarp receive it; and that the same fathers that give testimony for Matthew, give it likewise for Mark. Nay, your Lordship will find, I believe, that the present bishop of London [Gibson], in his third pastoral letter, speaks to the same effect. I will not trouble you nor myself with any more instances of the same kind. Let this, which occurred to me as I was writing, suffice. It may well suffice; for I presume the fact advanced by the minister and the bishop is a mistake. If the fathers of the first century do mention some passages that are agreeable to what we read in our evangelists, will it follow that these fathers had the same gospels before them? To say so is a manifest abuse of history, and quite inexcusable in writers that knew, or should have known, that these fathers made use of other gospels, wherein such passages might be contained; or they might be preserved in unwritten tradition. Besides which, I could almost venture to affirm, that these fathers of the first century do not expressly name the gospels we have of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John." \*

The supposition of Bolingbroke in the last sentence is true; or rather, to state the fact precisely, the Gospels are not named in the writings *ascribed* to fathers of the first century. In agreement with what has been quoted, the learned German theologian, Eichhorn, in his "Introduction to the New Testament," endeavors to prove at length, that the authors of those writings did not make use of our present Gospels, but of others different from them. †

\* Letter V. § 4.

† *Einleitung in d. N. T.*, i.e. Introduction to the New Testament, vol i p. 113, seqq. I give the pages of the first edition, which are numbered likewise in the margin of the second.



Another German theologian, Less, who died about the close of the last century, wrote in defence of the genuineness of the books of the New Testament. In treating this subject, the results at which he arrives, from an examination of the writings just mentioned, are thus stated by Bishop Marsh :—

“From the epistle of Barnabas, no inference can be deduced that he had read any part of the New Testament. From the genuine epistle, as it is called, of Clement of Rome, it may be inferred that Clement had read the first epistle to the Corinthians. From the Shepherd of Hermas, no inference whatsoever can be drawn. From the epistles of Ignatius, it may be concluded that he had read St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, and that there existed in his time evangelical writings, though it cannot be shown that he has quoted from them. From Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians, it appears that he had heard of St. Paul's epistle to that community, and that he quotes a passage which is in the first epistle to the Corinthians, and another which is in the epistle to the Ephesians; but no positive conclusion can be drawn with respect to any other epistle, or any of the four Gospels.” \*

According to this statement, it would appear that no evidence can be derived from the works ascribed to Apostolic Fathers in proof of the genuineness of the Gospels.

The writings of Justin Martyr have, till of late, been appealed to confidently, as affording very early and very important evidence of this fact. Lardner states, that “he has numerous quotations of our Gospels except that of St. Mark, which he has seldom quoted;” that “it must be plain to all, that he owned and had the highest respect for the four Gospels;” and that he affords proof, that “these Gospels were publicly read in the assemblies of the Christians every Lord's day.” † “It seems extremely material to be observed,” says Paley, “that in all Justin's works, from which might be extracted almost a complete life of Christ, there are but two

\* Marsh's *Michaelis*, vol. i. p. 354.

† Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*, p. ii. c. 10.

instances in which he refers to any thing as said or done by Christ which is not related concerning him in our present Gospels ; which shows that these Gospels, and these, we may say, alone, were the authorities from which the Christians of that day drew the information upon which they depended." \*

It is, however, at present contended, that Justin Martyr did not quote from our four Gospels, and therefore cannot afford evidence of their genuineness. He does not mention them by name. His quotations which agree in sense with passages found in the Gospels, he professes to take from what he calls "Memoirs by the Apostles;" and, in these quotations, there is generally a want of verbal coincidence with the passages in the Gospels to which they otherwise correspond.

"Mr. Stroth," says Bishop Marsh, "has shown by very satisfactory arguments, that these Memoirs were not our four Gospels, but a single gospel, which had much matter in common with the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke ; but which was not the same with any of them. Since Mr. Stroth's time, the subject has been again investigated by several eminent critics ; and the uniform result of their inquiries is, that Justin's *Ἀπομνημονεύματα* [the Memoirs in question] were not our four Gospels, but some single gospel." † "If," says Bishop Marsh, in another work, "the force of Mr. Stroth's arguments be admitted (and they seem really convincing), we cannot produce Justin as an evidence for the four Gospels ; but, on the other hand, no inference can be deduced to their disadvantage." ‡

The concluding remark, that no inference can be deduced to the disadvantage of the Gospels, Bishop Marsh endeavors to illustrate : but its truth will not be admitted by those who deny the genuineness of the Gospels ; and the proposition does not, in itself, appear tenable.

· Paley's Evidences of Christianity, p. i. c. ix. s. 1.

† Letters to the Anonymous Author of Remarks on Michaelis and his Commentator, p. 29.

‡ Marsh's Michaelis, i. 361.

“Justin Martyr,” says Eichhorn, “who was born A.D. 89, and died A.D. 163, a Samaritan, a native of Flavia Neapolis, early became converted from a heathen philosopher to a zealous Christian, and was one of the earliest Christian writers. He nowhere quotes the life and sayings of Jesus according to our present four Gospels, which he was not acquainted with. This is a very important circumstance in regard to the history of the Gospels; as he had devoted many years to travel, and resided a long time in Italy and Asia Minor.”\*

On the whole, it is concluded by Eichhorn and others, that our four Gospels, *in their present form*, were not in common use before the end of the second century. Previously to that time, it is supposed that other gospels were in circulation. “If we will not,” says Eichhorn, “be influenced by idle tales and unsupported tradition, but by the only sure evidence of history, we must conclude, that, before our present Gospels, other decidedly different gospels were in circulation, and were used during the first two centuries in the instruction of Christians.”† He supposes these earlier gospels and our first three Gospels, namely, those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, to have all had a common origin; and he gives the following account of the manner in which he conceives them to have been formed.

There was, he supposes, very early in existence a short historical sketch of the life of Christ, which may be called the Original Gospel. This was, probably, provided for the use of those assistants of the apostles in the work of teaching Christianity, who had not themselves seen the actions and heard the discourses of Christ. It was, however, but “a rough sketch,” “a brief and imperfect account,” “without historical plan or methodical arrangement.” In this respect it was, according to Eichhorn, very different from our four Gospels. “These present no rough sketch, such as we must suppose the first essay upon the life of Jesus to have been;

but, on the contrary, are works written with art and labor, and contain portions of his life of which no mention was made in the first preaching of Christianity.”\* This Original Gospel was the basis both of the earlier gospels used during the first two centuries, and of the first three of our present Gospels, by which, together with the Gospel of John, those earlier gospels were finally superseded. The earlier gospels retained more or less of the rudeness and incompleteness of the Original Gospel.

“But they very soon fell into the hands of those who undertook to supply their defects and incompleteness, both in the general compass of the history, and in the narration of particular events. Not content with a life of Jesus, which, like the gospel of the Hebrews, and those of Marcion and Tatian, commenced with his public appearance, there were those who early prefixed to the Memoirs used by Justin Martyr, and to the gospel of Cerinthus, an account of his genealogy, his birth, and the period of his youth. In like manner, we find, upon comparing together, in parallel passages, the remaining fragments of these gospels, that they were receiving continual accessions. The voice from heaven at the baptism of Jesus was originally stated to have been, *Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee*; as it is quoted by Justin Martyr in two places. Clement of Alexandria found the same, in the gospel of which we have no particular description, with the addition of the word ‘beloved:’ *Thou art my beloved Son; this day have I begotten thee*. Other gospels represented the voice as having been, *Thou art my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased*; as it is given in the catholic Gospels, namely, in Mark i. 11. In the gospel of the Ebionites, according to Epiphanius, both accounts of the voice from heaven were united: *Thou art my beloved Son, with thee I am well pleased; and again, This day have I begotten thee*. By these continual accessions, the original text of the life of Jesus was lost in a mass of additions, so that its words appeared among them but as insulated fragments. Of this any one may satisfy himself from the account of the baptism of Jesus, which was compiled out of various gospels. The necessary consequence was, that at

\* Einleitung in d. N. T., i. 5, 242.

last truth and falsehood, authentic and fabulous narratives, or such, at least, as through long tradition had become disfigured and falsified, were brought together promiscuously. The longer these narratives passed from mouth to mouth, the more uncertain and disfigured they would become. At last, at the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, in order, as far as might be, to preserve the true accounts concerning the life of Jesus, and to deliver them to posterity as free from error as possible, the Church, out of the many gospels which were extant, selected four, which had the greatest marks of credibility, and the necessary completeness for common use. There are no traces of our present Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, before the end of the second and the beginning of the third century. Irenæus, about the year 202, first speaks decisively of four gospels, and imagines all sorts of reasons for this particular number; and Clement of Alexandria, about the year 216,\* labored to collect divers accounts concerning the origin of these four gospels, in order to prove that these alone should be acknowledged as authentic. From these facts, it is evident, that it was about the end of the second and the beginning of the third century that the Church first labored to establish the universal authority of these four gospels, which were in existence before, if not altogether in their present form, yet in most respects such as we now have them, and to procure their general reception in the Church, with the suppression of all other gospels then extant.

“Posterity would indeed have been under much greater obligations, if, together with the Gospel of John, the Church had established, by public authority, only the first rough sketch of the life of Jesus, which was given to the earliest missionaries to authenticate their preaching; after separating it from all its additions and augmentations. But this was no longer possible; for there was no copy extant free from all additions, and the critical operation of separating this accessory matter was too difficult for those times.”†

\* The dates here assigned by Eichhorn, it may be observed, are, as has been supposed, the dates of the death of Irenæus and of Clement, not of the periods about which they wrote and flourished. These he elsewhere gives correctly.

† Einleit. in d. N. T., i. 142-145.

"Many ancient writers of the Church," Eichhorn subjoins in a note, "doubted the genuineness of many parts of our Gospels; but were prevented from coming to a decision by want of critical skill."\* It is to be observed, however, that the only *ancient writer of the Church*, whom he quotes in proof of this assertion, is Faustus, the well-known Manichæan of the fourth century.

In treating of the continual alterations and additions, to which he supposes *the text of the Original Gospel* to have been subjected, before it assumed that form in which it was used by the first three Evangelists, Eichhorn observes, that—

"Such an arbitrary mode of dealing with the composition of another, so that it shall pass thus altered into circulation, is in our times a thing unheard of and impossible; because it is prevented by the multiplication of printed copies. But it was different," he proceeds, "before the invention of printing. In transcribing a manuscript, the most arbitrary alterations were considered as allowable, since they affected only an article of private property, written for the use of an individual. But these altered manuscripts being again transcribed, without inquiry whether the manuscript transcribed contained the pure text of the author, altered copies of works thus passed unobserved into circulation. How often do the manuscripts of any one of the chronicles of the Middle Ages, of which several manuscripts are extant, agree with each other in exhibiting the same text, equally copious, or equally brief? What numerous complaints do we read in the fathers of the first centuries concerning the arbitrary alterations made in their writings, published but a short time before, by the possessors or transcribers of manuscripts. Scarcely had copies of the letters of Dionysius of Corinth begun to circulate, before, as he expresses himself, 'the apostles of Satan filled them with tares; omitting some things and adding others;' and the same fate, according to his testimony, the Holy Scriptures themselves could not escape. If transcribers had not permitted themselves to make the most arbitrary alterations in the writings of others, would it have been as customary as

\* Emleit. in d. N. T., i. 145.

we find it was for authors of those times to adjure their readers, at the end of their writings, to make no alterations in them, and to denounce the most fearful curses against those who should undertake to do so?

“The histories of Jesus must also have been subjected to the same mode of treatment. Does not Celsus object to the Christians, that they had changed the gospels three times, four times, and oftener? From what other cause can it proceed, that we still find fragments of the apocryphal gospels, in which all the accounts respecting some particular passage of the life of Jesus, which are elsewhere found scattered in different gospels, are brought together and combined into one whole? Thus the apocryphal gospel of the Ebionites, quoted by Epiphanius, has brought together all relating to the baptism of Jesus which is found concerning it in our first three Gospels, and in the Memoirs by the Apostles, used by Justin Martyr.”\*

“As soon,” he remarks in another place, “as the history of our catholic Gospels commences, we find men without any critical knowledge busy in altering their text, in shortening and lengthening it, and in making changes of synonymous words. And is this to be wondered at? Ever since the existence of written histories of Jesus, it had been customary for the possessors of manuscripts to make alterations in their text, according to the particular knowledge which they had of his preaching and actions, and of the events of his life. Thus the second and third generations of Christians only continued this practice respecting the gospels which the first had begun. The custom was, in the second century, so generally known, that even those who were not believers were acquainted with it. Celsus objects to the Christians, that they had changed their gospels three times, four times, and oftener, as if they were deprived of their senses. Clement also, at the end of the second century, speaks of those who corrupted the gospels, and ascribes it to them, that at Matt. v. 10, instead of the words, *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, there was found in some manuscripts, *for they shall be perfect*; and in others, *for they shall have a place where they shall not be persecuted.*”†

\* Einleit. in d. N. T., i. 173, seqq.

† Ibid., pp. 652, 653.

The preceding statements give a view of the difficulties which have been supposed to attend the proof of the genuineness of the Gospels ; and likewise of the opinions which have been entertained respecting their gross corruption, supposing them, in a certain sense, to have proceeded from the authors to whom they have been ascribed. The passages quoted from Eichhorn are not to be regarded as expressing the views of only a single writer. No work of a similar kind has been received in Germany with more approbation than his "Introduction to the New Testament;" and his notions respecting the Gospels, or others of the same general character, essentially affecting the belief of their genuineness, have been held by many modern German writers.

But, if the preceding statements and opinions be correct, an objector may say,—"You have little or rather no evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels, which reaches back beyond the close of the second century; though they were composed, as you imagine, about one hundred and fifty years before. You have, in fact, no proof of their existence, *in their present form*, previous to that period. All that can be rendered probable is, that some works were in existence, which served as a basis for the Gospels you now possess. But if, during the first two centuries, it was so common to enlarge the histories of Jesus Christ, then in use, with traditional tales, and with additions of various kinds, great and small ; and to alter and remodel them, as the transcribers or possessors of manuscripts might think proper,—you can hardly pretend to rely with much confidence upon those histories which now exist. We know in what manner the legends of saints have been gradually swelled with the addition of miraculous stories, unknown to those by whom they were first composed; and something very similar may have been the case with your Gospels."



In answer, then, to all that has been alleged, the object of the following work is to establish these two propositions :—

I. That the Gospels remain essentially the same as they were originally composed.

II. That they have been ascribed to their true authors.



# PART I.

**PROOF THAT THE GOSPELS REMAIN ESSENTIALLY THE SAME AS  
THEY WERE ORIGINALLY COMPOSED**





## PART I.

### CHAPTER I.

#### ARGUMENT FROM THE AGREEMENT OF THE RESPECTIVE COPIES OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

THE first proposition to be established, that the Gospels remain essentially the same as they were originally composed, requires some explanation and remark.

In regard to St. Matthew's Gospel, the proposition is to be understood in a particular sense. This Gospel, it is probable, was originally composed in Hebrew; and we possess only a Greek translation, made at a very early period. This translation, it will be my purpose to show, has been faithfully preserved. No reason has ever been adduced for suspecting that the translation was not intended to be a faithful representative of the original.

The Gospels, I have said, remain *essentially* the same as they were originally written. In common with all other ancient writings, they have been exposed to the accidents to which works preserved by transcription are liable. In the very numerous authorities for determining their text, we find a great number of differences, or various readings. But, by comparing those authorities together, we are able, in general, to ascertain satisfactorily the original text of the last three

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<sup>1</sup> On this subject see Note A, pp. 425-430.

The two passages last mentioned, and the other *interpolations* that have been suggested, — that is, the two insertions into the body of the text of the original Hebrew of Matthew's Gospel, and one into that of Luke's Gospel, — were, we may suppose, first written as notes or additional matter in the margin of some copies of the Gospel in which they are found. But passages belonging to the text of a work, which had been accidentally omitted by a transcriber, were likewise often preserved in the margin. From this circumstance, notes and additional matter, thus written, were not unfrequently mistaken for parts of the text, and introduced by a subsequent copier into what he thought their proper place. This is a fruitful source of various readings in ancient writings; and may explain how the passages in question, if not genuine, have become incorporated with the text of the Gospels.

The facts that have been mentioned, respecting doubtful or spurious passages in the text of the Gospels, imply nothing opposite to the general proposition maintained. On the contrary, in reasoning concerning those passages, we go upon the supposition of its truth. It is assumed, that the Gospels, generally speaking, have been faithfully preserved; but it is contended, that there are particular reasons for doubting, whether one or another of the passages in question, though found in

the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." There are strong, and it may seem sufficient, reasons for believing these words not to have been uttered by our Lord. But, on the supposition that they were not, it does not necessarily follow that they are an interpolation in the text of Matthew's Gospel.

The other passage consists of the words in which our Lord is said to have reproved James and John for the suggestion of calling down fire from heaven upon a village of the Samaritans, — Luke ix. 55, 56. There is nothing in the words themselves to excite a doubt of their having been spoken by Jesus. The only reason for questioning whether they originally made a part of Luke's Gospel is, that they are wanting in a large number of the most important copies of it. The passage presents one of the most difficult and curious problems in the criticism of the text of the New Testament.

Both these passages are examined in Note A, before referred to.

many or in all the extant manuscripts of a Gospel, proceeded from the pen of the evangelist. These reasons are specific, applying in every case to the particular passage under consideration, and not admitting of a general application. They suppose no new theory respecting the corruption of the Gospels, and no habit in transcribers of making unlicensed alterations. They imply nothing more than the operation of particular accidents, producing error in particular cases ; the possibility of which none will deny. All that we can say respecting any ancient work is, that it remains *essentially* the same as it was originally composed. For specific reasons, applying to some particular passage, we may doubt whether it proceeded from the pen of the evangelist. But unless the Gospels were exposed, as has been imagined, to some *peculiar* causes of corruption, there can be no question, that, generally speaking, we have satisfactory means of determining the original text of the last three Gospels, and that of the Greek translation of Matthew ; the number of authorities for settling it — manuscripts, ancient versions, and quotations by ancient writers — being far more numerous and important than those for settling the text of any other ancient writing.

We proceed, then, to the proof that the Gospels have not been exposed to any peculiar causes of corruption, but remain essentially the same as they were originally composed.

This appears, in the first place, from the agreement among our present manuscript copies of the Gospels, or of parts of the Gospels, in whatever form these copies appear. There have been examined, in a greater or less degree, about six hundred and seventy manuscripts\* of the whole, or of portions, of the Greek text of the Gospels. These were written in different countries, and at different periods, probably from the fifth century downwards. They have been found in places

See Scholz's Catalogue, in the Prolegomena to his N. T.

widely remote from each other, — in Asia, in Africa, and from one extremity of Europe to the other. Besides these manuscripts of the Greek text, there are many manuscripts of ancient versions of the Gospels, in different languages of each of the three great divisions of the world just mentioned. There are likewise many manuscripts of the works of the Christian fathers, abounding in quotations from the Gospels; and especially manuscripts of ancient commentaries on the Gospels, such as those of Origen, who lived in the third century, and of Chrysostom, who lived in the fourth, — in which we find their text quoted, as the different portions of it are successively the subjects of remark.

Now, all these different copies of the Gospels, or parts of the Gospels, — so numerous, so various in their character, so unconnected, offering themselves to notice in parts of the world so remote from each other, — concur in giving us essentially the same text. Divide them into four classes, corresponding to the four Gospels, and it is evident that those of each class are to be referred to one common source; that they are all copies, more or less remote, of the same original; that they all had one common text for their archetype. They vary, indeed, more or less from each other: but their variations have arisen from the common accidents of transcription; or, as regards the versions, partly from errors of translation; or, in respect to the quotations by the fathers, partly from the circumstance, that, in ancient as in modern times, the language of Scripture was often cited loosely, from memory, and without regard to verbal accuracy, in cases where no particular verbal accuracy was required. The agreement among the extant copies of any one of the Gospels, or of portions of it, is essential: the disagreements are accidental and trifling, originating in causes which, from the nature of things, we know must have been in operation. The same work everywhere appears: and, by comparing together different copies, we are able to ascertain the original text to a great degree



of exactness; or, in other words, where various readings occur, to determine what were probably the words of the author.

The Greek manuscripts, then, of any one of the Gospels, the versions of it, and the quotations from it by the fathers, are all, professedly, copies of that Gospel, or of parts of it; and these correspond with each other. But, as these professed copies thus correspond with each other, it follows that they were derived more or less remotely from one archetype. Their agreement admits of no explanation, except that of their being conformed to a common exemplar. In respect to each of the Gospels, the copies which we possess must all be referred, for their source, to one original Gospel, one original text, one original manuscript. As far back as our knowledge extends, Christians, throughout all past ages, in Syria, at Alexandria, at Rome, at Carthage, at Constantinople, and at Moscow, in the East and in the West, have all used copies of each of the Gospels, which were evidently derived from one original manuscript, and necessarily imply that such a manuscript, existing as their archetype, has been faithfully copied.

Let us now consider what must have been the consequence, if the supposition before stated, respecting the license taken by different transcribers, were true of any one of the Gospels. In this case, one transcriber, in one part of the world, would have made certain alterations in his copy, and inserted certain narratives which he had collected; and another, in another place, would have made different alterations, and inserted different narratives. Such copies, upon the supposition that this imagined license continued, would, when again transcribed, have been again changed and enlarged. Copies would have been continually multiplying, diverging more and more from the original and from each other. The original text would have been confounded and lost among additions and changes, till, at last, it might have appeared, to quote the language of

Eichhorn, only in "insulated fragments."\* No generally received text would have existed; none, therefore, could have been preserved and handed down. Instead of that agreement among the copies of each Gospel which now exists, we should have found everywhere manuscripts, presenting us with different collections of narratives and sayings; and differing, at the same time, in their arrangement of the same facts, and in their general style of expression. There would have been as great a want of correspondence among the manuscripts which professed to contain any particular Gospel as there is known to exist among those of the Arabian Nights, or among the copies of the *Gesta Romanorum*. They would have been more unlike than those manuscripts of chronicles of the Middle Ages to which Eichhorn refers,† as the Gospels have been much more frequently transcribed. The copies of these writings would have presented the same phenomena as those of some of the apocryphal books; that, for example, called the Gospel of the Infancy, which appears in several different forms, this collection of fables having been remodelled by one transcriber after another according to his fancy. At the same time, we should have found the want of agreement, which must have existed among different manuscripts of any one of the Gospels, extending itself equally to the translations of that Gospel, and to the professed quotations from it in ancient writers.

The argument which has been employed seems easy to be comprehended; and at the same time conclusive of the fact, that all our present copies of each of the Gospels are to be traced back to one original manuscript, in multiplying the copies of which, no such liberties can have been taken by transcribers as are supposed in the hypothesis under consideration. The argument seems, likewise, very obvious; yet its force and bearing appear to have been overlooked

\* See before, p. 6.

† See before, p. 8.

in framing that hypothesis. The fact does not seem to have been distinctly adverted to, that the transcriber or possessor of a manuscript, making such alterations as the hypothesis supposes, could introduce them only into a single copy, and into such others as might be transcribed from it; and that he could not, properly speaking, add to or corrupt the work itself. His copy would have no influence upon contemporary copies; and in the case of the Gospels, we may say, upon numerous contemporary copies, in which the true text might be preserved, or into which different alterations might be introduced. It is quite otherwise since the invention of printing. He who now introduces a corruption into the printed edition of a work, introduces it into all the copies of that edition; if it be the only edition, into all the copies of that work; and, in many cases, into a great majority of the copies which are extant, or which are most accessible. All these copies will agree in presenting us with the same changes or interpolations. He may properly be said to corrupt the work itself. Thus, before the invention of printing, the famous verse in the first Epistle of John, v. 7, was to be found, as far as is known, in the text of not more than two Greek manuscripts of all those in existence.\* But it was early admitted into a printed edition of the New Testament; and it is now to be found in a great majority of the printed copies, and consequently of all the copies, of the New Testament. It is not now to be considered as a corruption of a particular manuscript, but as a corruption of the Epistle itself. If printing had not been invented, and the Epistle had been preserved, as before, only by transcription, the fact would probably have been very different. The passage, instead of being in a great majority of copies, might have been found

\* I refer to the Codex Montfortianus, and to another lately discovered in the Vatican Library by Scholz (see his *Bibelschkritische Reise*, i.e. *Travels for the Purpose of Biblical Criticism*, p. 105) But it is not certain that either of these manuscripts was written before the invention of printing.

only in a very small minority. The power of an ancient copier to alter the text of a work was very different from that of a modern editor; yet it would seem that they must have been confounded in the hypothesis under consideration, unless some further account is to be given of the manner in which the text of our present Gospels has been formed and perpetuated.

It is evident from the preceding statements, that the existing copies of each of the Gospels have been derived from some common exemplar, faithfully followed by transcribers. But it may be said, that this exemplar was not the original work, as it proceeded from the hand of the evangelist; that the lineage of our present copies is not to be traced so high; but that, at some period, the course of corruption which has been described was arrested, and a standard text was selected and determined upon, which has served as an archetype for all existing copies; but that this text, thus fixed as the standard, had already suffered greatly from the corruptions of transcribers, and was very different from the original. This supposition is implied in the passage from Eichhorn, which has been before quoted.\*

*The Church*, according to Eichhorn, selected four gospels out of a multitude, and labored to procure their general reception in *the Church*. In order to understand this proposition, it is necessary to determine what must be the meaning of the word "Church." There was no organized universal Church, nor any thing resembling such an establishment, in existence, till long after the close of the second century. There was no single ecclesiastical government, which extended over Christians, or over a majority of Christians, or over any considerable portion of their number. They had no regular modes of acting in concert, nor any effectual

\* See before, p. 7.

means whatever of combining together for a common purpose. Neither the whole body, nor a majority of Christians ever met by delegation to devise common measures. Such an event did not take place till a hundred and twenty years after the end of the second century, when Christianity had become the established religion of the Roman empire, and the first general council, that of Nice, was called together by the Emperor Constantine. At the time of which we are speaking, Christians were spread over the world from the Euphrates to the Pillars of Hercules. They were disturbed and unsettled by frequent cruel persecutions, one of which, that under Severus, was at its height just about the commencement of the third century. They were separated from each other by a difficulty and consequent infrequency of communication, of which, such are the facilities that now exist, we can hardly form a just notion. They were kept asunder by difference of language; some speaking the Greek, some the Latin, and others different languages and dialects of the East. Exclusively of those generally considered as heretics, they were disunited and alienated from each other by differences of religious opinion, and even by violent controversies; for it was before the end of the second century, that Victor, Bishop of Rome, had excommunicated the Eastern churches. This being the state of Christians at the end of the second century, the proposition on which I am remarking supposes that they corresponded together, and came to an agreement to select four out of the many manuscript gospels then in existence, all of which had been exposed to the license of transcribers. Of these four, no traces are to be discovered before that time: but it was determined to adopt them for common use, to the prejudice, it would seem, of others longer known, and to which different portions of Christians had respectively been accustomed. There was a universal and silent compliance with this proposal. Copies of the four new manuscripts, and translations of them, were

at once circulated through the world. All others ceased to be transcribed, and suddenly disappeared from common notice. Copiers were at the same time checked in their former practice of licentious alteration. Thus a revolution was effected in regard to the most important sacred books of Christians, and at the same time better habits were introduced among the transcribers of those books.

I believe it will be seen, that I have stated nothing but what the supposition we are considering necessarily implies. But when we divest it of its looseness and ambiguity of language, and state clearly the details which it must embrace, no one can suppose that any such series of events took place at the end of the second century. It is intrinsically incredible; but, if this were not the case, we might urge against it the fact, that there is no record, nor any trace of it. It is supposed, that a change was effected in the sacred books of Christians, spread abroad, as they were, throughout the civilized world. Any change of this sort could not be effected without great difficulty, under the most favorable circumstances. Let us consider for a moment what an effort would be required, and what resistance must be overcome, in order to bring into general use among a single nation of Christians at the present day, not other gospels, but simply a new and better translation of our present Gospels. In the case under consideration, allowing the supposed change to have been possible, it must have met with great opposition; it must have provoked much discussion; it must have been the result of much deliberation; there must have been a great deal written about it at the time; it must have been often referred to afterwards, especially in the religious controversies which took place; it would have been one of the most important events in the history of Christians; and the account of the transaction must have been preserved. There would have been distinct memorials of it everywhere, in contemporary and subsequent writings. That there are no

traces of it whatever is alone conclusive evidence that it never took place.

But we may even put out of view all the preceding considerations. "The Church," it is said, "about the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, first labored to procure the general reception of the four Gospels in the Church." By the Church must be meant the great body of Christians. The general reception of the Gospels was founded upon the belief, real or pretended, of their being the genuine works of those to whom they were ascribed. The statement, therefore, resolves itself into the following dilemma: Either the great body of Christians determined to believe what they knew to be false, or they determined to profess to believe it. The first proposition is an absurdity in terms; the last is a moral absurdity.

There is, then, no ground for the supposition of any interposition of authority, or of any concert among Christians, at the end of the second century, to select our present Gospels for common use; or, in other words, to select from the great number then in existence four particular manuscripts, which should serve as archetypes for all subsequent transcribers, and the text of which should alone be considered as the authorized text. Our present agreement of authorities, which necessarily refers us back to one manuscript of each of the Gospels as the archetype of all the copies of that Gospel, cannot thus be explained. We are left, therefore, to the obvious conclusion, which we adopt in regard to other writings, that this manuscript was the original work of an individual author, which has been faithfully transmitted to us.

The argument from the agreement of our present manuscript copies of the Gospels seems alone to be decisive of the truth of the proposition which it is brought to establish. But a similar mode of reasoning may be applied to the agreement between the very numerous manuscripts of the Gospels

which were in existence at the end of the second century; and, as it was before this period that transcribers are fancied to have taken the greatest liberties, it may be worth while to enter into the detail of this argument, especially as it is connected with the proof of the antiquity of the Gospels.

Our present Gospels, it is conceded, were in common use among Christians about the end of the second century. The number of manuscripts then in existence bore some proportion to the number of Christians, and this to the whole population of the Roman empire. The population of the Roman empire in the time of the Antonines is estimated by Gibbon at about one hundred and twenty millions.\* With regard to the proportion of Christians, the same writer observes, "The most favorable calculation will not permit us to imagine, that more than a twentieth part of the subjects of the empire had enlisted themselves under the banner of the cross before the important conversion of Constantine."† If not more than a twentieth part was Christian at the end of the third century, just after which the conversion of Constantine took place, we can hardly estimate more than a fortieth part of it as Christian at the end of the second century. Yet this proportion seems irreconcilable with the language which we find used concerning the number of Christians. Just after the close of the first century, Pliny was sent by Trajan to govern the provinces of Pontus and Bithynia. While exercising his office, many accusations were brought to him against Christians; and he wrote to the emperor to consult him on the subject:—

"I have recourse," he says, "to you for advice; for it has appeared to me a subject proper to consult you about, especially on account of the number of those against whom accusations are brought. For many of all ages, of every rank, and of both sexes likewise, have been and will be accused. The contagion of this



superstition has made its way, not in cities only, but in the lesser towns also, and in the open country. It seems to me that it may be stopped and corrected. It is certain, that the temples, which were almost deserted, begin to be frequented; and the sacred solemnities are revived after a long intermission. Victims likewise are everywhere sold, of which, till lately, there were but very few purchasers." \*

There is no reason to suppose, that Christians were more numerous in Pontus and Bithynia than in any other part of Asia Minor, or in Macedonia, or in Greece. Yet, if we suppose them to have constituted but a fortieth or even a twentieth part of the inhabitants, there would be an extravagance in the statements of Pliny, not to be expected in an official letter, written for the purpose of affording facts to the emperor, on which to found specific directions. I pass over much other evidence with respect to the number of Christians; † and will quote only one or two passages from Tertullian, who wrote at the particular period which we are considering, about the year 200. In speaking of the submission of Christians to the civil authority by which they were persecuted, he remarks, that it may clearly appear to be the result of the patience taught them by their religion; —

“considering,” he says, “that we, so great a multitude of men, almost the majority of every city, pass our lives silently and modestly, more known, perhaps, as individuals than as a body, and to be recognized only by our reformation from ancient vices.” ‡

Again, in addressing those who governed the Roman empire, he says: —

‘We are but of yesterday, and we have filled every thing that is yours, — cities, islands, castles, free towns, council-halls, the very

\* Plinii Epist., lib. x. epist. 97.

† See Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*, p. ii. c. ix.

‡ *Ad Scapulam*, § 2, p. 69, ed. Priorii.

camp, all classes of men, the palace, the senate, the forum. We have left you nothing but your temples. We can number your armies: there are more Christians in a single province. Even if unequal in force, is there any war for which we, who so readily submit to death, should not be prepared, or not prompt, if our religion did not teach us rather to be slain than to slay? Unarmed and without rebellion, had we only separated from you, we might thus have fought against you, by inflicting the injury which you would have suffered from the divorce. If we, such a multitude of men, had broken away from you, retiring into some remote corner of the world, your government would have been covered with shame at the loss of so many citizens, whoever they might be. The very desertion would have punished you. Without doubt, you would have been terrified at your solitude; at the silence and stupor of all things, as if the world were dead. You would have had to look about for subjects." \*

This, it may be said, is the language of exaggeration: unquestionably it is so. But Tertullian was a writer of far too much acuteness and too much real eloquence to suffer the boldness and vehemence of his language to pass those limits, beyond which their only effect must have been to expose him to derision. The very passage which I have quoted shows that he was a man of no ordinary mind. But, as far as its exaggeration is concerned, the most unwise and most impudent of declaimers would not have so stated the number of Christians, if it did not amount to more than a fortieth part of the whole population of the empire, — exclusively of those denominated heretics, who were few in comparison with catholic Christians. I accept, however, this proportion; and only wish it to be well understood, that it is fairly within the truth; probably falling very far short of it. The conclusion to be established admits of great wastefulness in the calculations leading to it. The fortieth part of one hundred and twenty millions, the estimated population of the empire, is

three millions. There were Christians without the bounds of the empire, but I am willing to include those also in the number supposed. At the end of the second century, then, there were three millions of believers, using our present Gospels, regarding them with the highest reverence, and anxious to obtain copies of them. Few possessions could have been more valued by a Christian than a copy of those books, which contained the history of the religion for which he was exposing himself to the severest sacrifices. Their cost, if he were able to defray it, must have been but a very trifling consideration. But a common copy of the Gospels was not a book of any great bulk or expense.' I shall not, therefore, I think, be

That the cost of books in ancient times was not excessive, may appear, in part, from the circumstance, that Juvenal describes them as among the possessions of Codrus, whom he represents as extremely poor. They were a part of his *totum nihil*.

"*Jamque vetus Græcos servabat cista libellos.*" — Sat. III. 206.

But it is remarkable how little exact information is to be found respecting the cost of books in ancient times. "The prices," says Arbuthnot, "which I find mentioned by the ancients, are for such as were manuscripts in our sense, — that is, not published, — and valuable for the rarity of them." Martial, however (lib. i. epig. 118), states the cost of the first book of his Epigrams, or perhaps of the first and second (lib. ii. epig. 93), in an ornamented copy, *rasum pumice, purpuræque cultum*, at five denarii; which, taking silver as the standard of comparison, is equal to about seventy-two cents, American money. This was a book for the luxurious. A copy of any one of the Gospels might probably have been bought at a much cheaper rate in proportion to its size. The price of Martial's thirteenth book, which contains far less matter than the first, but amounts to two hundred and seventy-two verses, he states to have been four sesterii; or, if that were thought too much, two sesterii, which he says would still leave a profit to the bookseller (lib. xiii. epig. 3). Two sesterii were half a denarius; that is, about seven cents. We sometimes confound the state of things in the Middle Ages, when there was a great scarcity of books, with that which existed in the flourishing times of Greek and Roman literature. It would be a still greater mistake to suppose that the number of Greek manuscripts of the Gospels extant during that period in Western Europe, where the Greek was almost an unknown tongue, affords any means of determining the number in existence when the Greek was a living language, and a medium of communication throughout the civilized world.

charged with over-estimating, if I suppose that there was one copy of the Gospels for every fifty Christians. Scattered over the world, as they were, if the proportion of them to the heathens was no greater than has been assumed, fifty Christians would often be as many as were to be found in any one place, and often more; but we cannot suppose that there were many collections of Christians without a copy of the Gospels. Origen, upon quoting a passage from the New Testament, says that it is written not "in any rare books, read only by a few studious persons, but in those in the most common use."\* In truth, there can be little doubt that copies of the Gospels were owned by a large portion of Christians, who had the means of procuring them; and in supposing only one copy of these books for every fifty Christians, the estimate is probably much within the truth. This proportion, however, will give us sixty thousand copies of the Gospels for three millions of Christians.

This number of copies may strike some, who have never before made any estimate of the kind, as larger than was to be expected. But the following facts may serve to show that the calculation is not extravagant. In the latter part of the second century, a history of Christ was compiled by Tatian, professedly, as is commonly believed, from the four Gospels. Tatian was a heretic, and his work never obtained much reputation or currency. Eusebius, the historian of the Church in the first half of the fourth century, is the earliest writer who mentions it. His acquaintance with books was extensive; yet he appears not to have examined it. At the present day, no copy of it is known to be in existence. Yet of this obscure work, Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus in the fifth century, says that he found two hundred copies in use among Christian churches, which he removed, and supplied their

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\* *Ἐν τοῖς δημώδεστέροις.*—Orig. cont. Cels., lib. vii. § 37; Opp. i. 720, ed. Delarue.

place by copies of the Gospels.\* It appears, then, that, in churches to which the examination of a single bishop extended, there were two hundred copies of a book of suspicious credit, and not in common use; and that the place of these was readily supplied by copies of the Gospels. This fact is one of those which may serve to show that the estimate of the whole number of copies of the Gospels existing at the end of the second century is far from being too great.

Again, in the Acts of the Apostles,† it is related, that, of those who had become converts to Christianity in Ephesus and its neighborhood, some had been addicted to the study of magic. After their conversion, they brought together their books relating to this subject, to be burnt; and the value of them is said to have been fifty thousand pieces of silver. If, as is probable, by "pieces of silver" is to be understood *cistophori*, a common Asiatic coin and money of account, the sum mentioned amounts to about four thousand two hundred and fifty dollars. Books of magic, whatever may be here intended by that name, would be sold at a high price. But we cannot reasonably suppose those works on magic to have been the larger portion of the books owned by the converts of Ephesus and its vicinity at this early period. Such being the case, we may infer that the number of copies of the Gospels in use among Christians at the end of the second century did not fall short of that which has been estimated, but probably far exceeded it.

There were, then, at the end of the second century, when it is agreed that the Gospels were in common use, at least sixty thousand copies of them dispersed over the world. These copies had not been subjected to the licentious alterations of transcribers. They agreed essentially with each

\* Theodoret. Hæret. Fab, lib i. c. 20; Opp. iv. 208, ed. Sirmond.

† Chap xix. ver. 19.

other. This is implied in the fact that they *were* copies of our present Gospels. It is made evident by the consideration, that, if there had been important discrepancies among these sixty thousand copies, no series of events could either have destroyed the evidence of these discrepancies, or could have produced the present agreement among existing copies, derived, as they are, from those in use at the period in question. The agreement, then, at the end of the second century, among the numerous copies of the respective Gospels, proves that an archetype of each Gospel had been faithfully followed by transcribers. This archetype, as we have seen, there is no ground for imagining to have been any other than the original work of the author of that Gospel. It follows, therefore, that, in the interval between the composition of these works and the end of the second century, their text did not suffer, as has been fancied, from the licentiousness of transcribers.

But it must have taken a long time, — I use an indefinite expression, to which there can be no objection, leaving it to every one to fix such a period as he may think most probable, — it must have taken a long time for the Gospels to obtain so established and extensive a reputation, to come into common use as sacred books among Christians throughout the civilized world, and for such a number of copies of them to be made. They must have been composed, therefore, a long time before the end of the second century; or, rather, before the year 180, about which period Irenæus wrote, who asserts their general reception and acknowledged authority, in as strong language as any Christian would use at the present day. It follows, then, from all that has been said, that, long before the latter part of the second century, our present Gospels were composed by four different authors, whose works obtained general reception among Christians as authentic histories and sacred books, and were everywhere spread and handed down, without any essential alterations from transcribers.

## CHAPTER II.

### ARGUMENTS DRAWN FROM OTHER CONSIDERATIONS.

BESIDE the argument already adduced, there are others to which we will now advert.

I. It would have been inconsistent with the common sentiments and practice of mankind for transcribers to make such alterations and additions as have been imagined, in the sacred books which they were copying. No one can be so dull as not to feel the propriety and importance of preserving the genuine text of books which are regarded as works of authority, or as possessing a peculiar character in consequence of their having been composed by a particular author. In proportion as a work is of higher authority, this sentiment will be stronger. It would be idle to imagine, that the habit of making additions and alterations at will, which is attributed to the transcribers of the Gospels, was common in ancient times, and practised in the transcription of other writings; the histories, for instance, of Thucydides or Tacitus. But, with the great body of believers, the Gospels were peculiarly guarded from corruption; and what we apprehend so little concerning other writings is still less to be apprehended concerning them. The Christians\* of the first two centuries, it

\* By "the Christians" I mean, here and elsewhere, the great body of believers, the generality of Christians, the *catholic* Christians. Conformably to

cannot be doubted, valued very highly their sacred books and none more highly than those which contained records of the actions and discourses of Christ. But they valued them as sacred books, and as authentic histories, and not as the patchwork of unknown transcribers. They would not, therefore, suffer them gradually to assume the latter character. They would not cause or permit alterations and additions to be silently introduced into books of history, the authenticity of which would be thus destroyed; and sacred books, the peculiar character of which would, in consequence, be lost. To interpolate or alter any thing in books of the latter kind has commonly been considered as a crime, bordering upon sacrilege. This sentiment may be counteracted in a certain degree; but it is a very general, a very natural, and a very strong one. The care of any community in preserving their sacred books from corruption will be proportioned to the value which they set upon those books; and the degree in which they value them will be proportioned to the interest which they feel in their religion. But no men ever felt that interest more strongly than the Christians of the first two centuries. There is therefore, as we might expect, abundant evidence extant in their writings, that they had as great reverence for the sacred books of our religion, and were as little disposed to make or to suffer an admixture of foreign matter with their genuine text, as Christians of the present day. I will quote a few passages in proof of this fact.

The first writer by whom any one of the Gospels is expressly mentioned is Papias, who lived about the beginning of the second century,\* a contemporary of the disciples of the

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its common use in speaking of the first ages of Christianity, I use the name as a general, not a universal term. I do not mean to include under it the heretical sects of the Ebionites and the Gnostics, to whom all the assertions made respecting "the Christians" do not apply. The evidence which those sects afford of the genuineness of the Gospels will be considered hereafter.

\* The assertion of Eichhorn, that we find no traces of our first three Gos-



apostles. He speaks particularly of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, affirming that they were composed by those individuals, and that the Gospel of Mark was founded on the oral narratives of Peter. He applies to them the title of *oracles*.\* The respect in which they were held appears from this title, and from the authors to whom they were referred. Christians would neither corrupt such works, nor suffer them to be corrupted.

About the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr describes the histories of Christ which he used as written by apostles and their companions,† by those whom Christians believed.‡ He says, that either these books, or the writings of the Jewish prophets, were read in Christian churches on the first day of every week.§ He everywhere appeals to them as of undoubted authority. They were regarded by him, we may infer, as entitled to at least equal reverence with the Jewish Scriptures. But in the dialogue which he represents himself as having held with Trypho, an unbelieving Jew, he charges the Jews with having expunged certain passages of the Old Testament relating to Christ. To this Trypho answers, that the charge seems to him incredible. Justin replies: "It does seem incredible; for to mutilate the Scriptures would be a more fearful crime than the worship of the golden calf, or than the sacrifice of children

pels before the end of the second century, can be reconciled with well-known and undisputed facts only by supposing that our present Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke have been so corrupted as not to be essentially the same with those which anciently bore their names. — I scarcely know whether it is worth while to observe, that Eichhorn repeatedly quotes the mention by Papias of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. In one place, he says, that, "long before the end of the second century, the authors of the first three Gospels are named as authors of narratives of the life of Jesus; as, for example, Matthew and Mark are so named by Papias." — *Einleitung in d. N. T.*, vol. i. (2d ed.) p. 684.

\* Apud Euseb. Hist. Eccles., lib. iii. c. 39.

† Dial. cum Tryph., p. 361, ed. Thirlb.

‡ Apolog. Prim., p. 54.

§ Ibid., p. 97.

to demons, or than slaying the prophets themselves.”\* It is not probable that Christians were tampering with their own sacred books at a time when they had such feelings respecting those of the Old Testament. The histories of Christ used by Justin, I shall hereafter show, were our present Gospels.

Some of the heretics in the second century made, or were charged with making, alterations in the Christian Scriptures, in order to accommodate them to their own opinions. Of such corrupters of Scripture, Dionysius, who was bishop of Corinth about the year 170, thus speaks: “I have written epistles at the desire of the brethren. But the apostles of the Devil have filled them with darnel, taking out some things, and adding others. Against such, a woe is denounced. It is not wonderful, therefore, that some have undertaken to corrupt the Scriptures of the Lord, since they have corrupted writings not to be compared with them.”† The meaning of Dionysius is, that, the persons spoken of having shown their readiness to commit such a crime, it was not strange that they should even corrupt the Scriptures; these being works of much higher authority than his epistles, and from the falsification of which more advantage was to be gained. We perceive how strongly he expresses his sense of the guilt of such corruption; a sentiment common, without doubt, to a great majority of Christians. When Dionysius wrote, it clearly could not have been esteemed innocent, and a matter of indifference, for transcribers to make intentional alterations in their copies of the Gospels. Yet this is one of the passages which have been adduced to show that such was their common practice.‡ But, as we have no reason to doubt that the prevailing sentiment was that which Dionysius has expressed, we may confidently infer that Christians did not

\* Dial. cum Tryph., p. 296.

† Apud Euseb. H. E., lib. iv. c. 23.

‡ See before, p. 8.

generally practise or permit what was esteemed a work of "the apostles of the Devil," and one "against which a woe was denounced."

"We have not received," says his contemporary, Irenæus, "the knowledge of the way of our salvation by any others than those through whom the Gospel has come down to us; which Gospel they first preached, and afterwards, by the will of God, transmitted to us in writing, that it might be the foundation and pillar of our faith."\* He immediately proceeds to speak particularly of the composition of the four Gospels, referring them to the authors to whom they are commonly ascribed. These books he afterwards represents as the most important books of Scripture;† and the Scriptures he calls "oracles of God."‡—"We know," he says, "that the Scriptures are perfect, as dictated by the Logos of God, and his spirit."§

Such passages show the reverence in which the Scriptures were held, and the feelings with which any corruption of them must have been regarded. They are likewise irreconcilable with the supposition, that the Gospels had but just appeared in their present form; and that, previously, those who possessed copies of these books had regarded them only "as an article of private property, in which any alterations were allowable."|| If the Gospels had been partly the work of unknown transcribers, the fact must have been notorious; and no writer, of whatever character, would have ventured to use such language as that of Irenæus.

Clement of Alexandria, his contemporary, calls the Scriptures divinely inspired,¶ divine and holy books.\*\* He speaks of the four Gospels, in contradistinction from all other ac-

\* Cont. Hæres, lib. iii. c. 1, p. 173, ed. Massuet.

† Ib., lib. iii. c. 11, § 8, p. 190.

‡ Ib., lib. i. c. 8, § 1, p. 37

§ Ib., lib. ii. c. 28, § 2, p. 156.

|| See before, p. 8.

¶ Stromat., lib. vii. § 16, p. 894, ed. Potter.

\*\* Pædagog., lib. iii. c. 12, p. 309.

counts of Christ, as having been handed down to the Christians of his age;\* and he gives an account of the order of succession in which they were composed, saying that this account was derived from the presbyters of former times. †

Tertullian manifests the same reverence for the Scriptures, and especially for the Gospels, as his contemporaries, Irenæus and Clement. He, like them, quotes the Gospels as works of decisive authority, in the same manner as any modern theologian might do. He wrote much against the heretic Marcion, whom he charges with having rejected the other Gospels, and having mutilated the Gospel of Luke to conform it to his system. This leads him to make some statements which have a direct bearing on the present subject. "I affirm," says Tertullian, "that not only in the churches founded by apostles, but in all which have fellowship with them, *that* Gospel of Luke, which we so steadfastly defend, has been received from its first publication."—"The same authority," he adds, "of the apostolic churches will support the other Gospels, which, in like manner, we have from them, conformably to their copies." ‡—"They," he says, "who were resolved to teach otherwise than the truth, were under a necessity of new-modelling the records of the doctrine."—"As they could not have succeeded in corrupting the doctrine without corrupting its records, so we could not have preserved and transmitted the doctrine in its integrity, but by preserving the integrity of its records." §

I quote only a few short passages from Christian writers, and those which have the most immediate relation to my present purpose; because I shall hereafter have occasion to show, more at length, the general reception of the Gospels, and the reverence in which they were held, at the end of the

\* Stromat., lib. iii. § 13, p. 553. † Apud Euseb. H. E., lib. vi. c. 14.

‡ Advers. Marcion, lib. iv. § 5, pp 415, 416, ed. Priorii.

§ De Præscript. Hæret., § 38, p. 216.

second century. The following is from an anonymous writer against the heresy of Artemon. He accuses those who maintained this heresy, of corrupting the Scriptures, and adds: "How daring a crime this is, they can hardly be ignorant: for either they do not believe that the divine Scriptures were dictated by the Holy Spirit,—and then they are infidels; or they believe themselves wiser than the Holy Spirit,—and what are they then but madmen?"\* Origen, in like manner, regarded the Scriptures as dictated by the Holy Spirit. He has many passages which correspond to the following, from one of his commentaries: "After this, Mark says [x. 50], *And he, casting away his garment, leaped, and came to Jesus.* Did the evangelist write without thought, when he related that the man cast away his garment, and leaped, and came to Jesus? Or shall we dare to say, that this was inserted in the Gospel without purpose? I believe that not one jot or one tittle of the divine instructions is without purpose."†

In commenting upon Matt. xix. 19, Origen suspects, for reasons which it is unnecessary to state, the genuineness of the words, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*; but he says, that, if it were not for the number of various readings found in different copies of the Gospels, "it might well seem irreverent in any one to suspect that the precept has been inserted here, without its having been mentioned by the Saviour."‡

The passages quoted show the state of opinion and feeling among Christians during the first two centuries. They have been alleged to prove nothing in itself improbable, but, on the contrary, the existence of sentiments which it is incredible should not have existed. But it is clear, that those who entertained them would neither make nor permit intentional alterations in the Gospels.

\* Apud Euseb. II. E., lib. v. c. 28.

† Comment in Matt., tom. xvi. § 12; Opp. iii. 734.

‡ Comment. in Matt., tom. xv. § 14; Opp. iii. 671.

II. About the close of the second century, different Christian writers express strong censure of the mutilations and changes which they charge some heretics, particularly Marcion, with having made in the Gospels, and other books of the New Testament. Some passages to this effect have been quoted. It is unnecessary to adduce others, because the fact is well known and universally admitted. The feeling expressed by those writers was common, without doubt, to Christians generally. But they could not have felt, or have expressed themselves, as they did, if their own copies of the Gospels had been left, as is imagined, at the mercy of transcribers, and there had been such a disagreement as must in consequence have existed among them. What text of their own would they have had to oppose to the text of Marcion, or of any other heretic? What would they have had to bring forward, but a collection of discordant manuscripts, many of them, probably, differing as much from each other as the altered gospels of the heretics did from any one of them? If our Gospels had not existed, in their present form, till the close of the second century; if, before that time, their text had been fluctuating, and assuming in different copies a different form, such as transcribers might choose to give it, — those by whom they were used could not have ventured to speak with such confidence of the alterations of the heretics. They must have apprehended too strongly the overwhelming retort, to which they lay so exposed, and against which they were so defenceless. If, however, any one can imagine that they really would have been bold enough to make the charges which they do against heretics, yet in this case they must at least have shown strong solicitude to guard the point where they themselves were so liable to attack. But no trace of such solicitude appears.

III. We happen to have, in the works of a single writer, decisive evidence that no such differences ever existed in the

manuscripts of the Gospels as are supposed in the hypothesis under consideration, and consequently that no such liberties as have been imagined were ever taken by their transcribers. Origen was born about the year 185, and flourished during the first half of the third century, dying about the year 254. He was particularly skilled in the criticism of the Scriptures. His labors upon the text of the Septuagint are well known. He had in his possession, or had the means of consulting, various manuscripts of the Gospels, of which he made a critical use, noticing their various readings. His notices are principally found in commentaries, which he wrote on the Gospels. Under these circumstances, if the manuscripts of the first and second centuries had differed from each other as much as has been imagined, we should expect to find distinct evidence of the fact in the voluminous writings of this early father. But this is not the case. On the contrary, the language which he uses, and the kind of various readings which he actually adduces, prove that he was ignorant of any such diversities as have been fancied. But he could not have been ignorant of them, if they had existed. The various readings which he mentions are all unimportant variations. The greater part of them are still extant in our manuscripts. He remarks upon no such diversities as must have existed, if transcribers had indulged in such licentious alterations as have been supposed. On the contrary, the citations and remarks of Origen are adapted to produce a conviction, that the manuscripts of his time differed, to say the least, as little from each other, as the manuscripts now extant; and, consequently, that before his time there was the same care to preserve the original text as there has been since.

This conviction is not weakened by a passage in his writings, which may seem at first view to favor the opposite opinion. The passage has been already referred to,\* in this

\* See before, p. 41.

chapter, for the purpose of proving the reverence in which the Gospels were held; but we will now attend to it a little more particularly. Origen, as has been said, was led, by a course of reasoning of considerable subtilty, to doubt the genuineness of the words (Matt. xix. 19), *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. After stating his arguments at some length, he says:—

“But if it were not that in many other passages there is a difference among copies, so that all those of the Gospel of Matthew do not agree together, and so also as it regards the other Gospels, it might well seem irreverent in any one to suspect that the precept has been inserted here without its having been mentioned by the Saviour. But it is evident that there exists much difference among copies, partly from the carelessness of some transcribers, partly from the rashness of others in altering improperly what they find written, and partly from those revisers who add or strike out according to their own judgment.”

He immediately subjoins, that he had provided a remedy for such errors in the copies of the Septuagint, by giving a new critical edition of it.

In this passage, nothing is referred to but well-known, common causes of error in the transcription of manuscripts. We learn from it, that transcribers were sometimes careless; that they sometimes improperly altered from conjecture a reading in the copy before them, which they fancied to be erroneous; and that those whose business it was to revise manuscripts after transcription, for the purpose of correcting errors, did sometimes, in the want of proper critical apparatus, rely too much upon their mere judgment concerning what was probably the true text. These are all propositions which we might credit without the testimony of Origen. His language in speaking of the difference among the manuscripts of the Gospels, though he had a particular purpose in representing it as considerable, is much less strong than what has been used by some modern critics, and among them by Gries-



back himself, in speaking of the disagreement among our present copies. The expressions of the latter, as one may easily satisfy himself, are very loose and exaggerated.\* If they had been found in Origen, it might have been difficult to believe that the agreement among the copies of the Gospels existing in his time was really as great as we know it to be among those extant at the present day. His language, such as it is, affords no ground for a contrary supposition.

But the passage before us deserves further attention in several points of view. In the first place, it goes to prove, as has been remarked, the reverence with which the Gospels were regarded. In the next place, it shows the importance which the most eminent Christian writer of his age attached to the *proposal* of omitting a few words in the text of St.

\* Griesbach, for instance, says (in the Prolegomena to his New Testament, sect. iii.), that what he calls the Alexandrine text of the New Testament differs from what he calls the Western text, "in its whole conformation and entire coloring," *totò suo habitu universoque colore*. According to him, if we take the quotations of Origen and Clement, certain manuscripts, and certain other authorities, all of which he classes together as Alexandrine, and settle the text of the New Testament from them alone, this text will differ in its whole aspect from that which may be formed by a similar process from the quotations of Tertullian and Cyprian, and the other authorities which, according to him, belong to the Western class. All that seems necessary to enable one acquainted with the subject to perceive the extravagance of Griesbach's language, is to have his attention directed to it. It is inconsistent with his own statements elsewhere, and with indisputable facts.

The assertion of Griesbach above quoted is made by him in a merely critical essay, in which any thing like exaggeration was least to be expected. If an assertion of a similar kind had been found in any work, however declamatory, of a writer of the first three centuries, the circumstance might have seemed embarrassing, as respects the present argument. We should, however, have been equally justified in regarding such language as highly extravagant in the one case as in the other. I advert to these facts in order to illustrate a principle of considerable importance, that single passages from a particular writer are often of very little weight or importance, when opposed to a conclusion resting upon strong probabilities. Many writers, who have no intention of deceiving, are far from being accurate and attentive in estimating the meaning and force of their words.

Matthew. But this renders incredible the supposition, that it had been common for the possessors and transcribers of manuscripts to make intentional changes in the text of the Gospels. The passage shows the prevalence of a sentiment wholly inconsistent with the disposition to make such changes; and the prevalence of a belief in the genuineness of their text, which could not have existed if such changes had been common. This sentiment and belief are further exhibited in another passage of Origen, where, comparing the prediction of our Saviour, *The Son of man shall be three days and three nights in the earth*, with his declaration to the penitent robber, *This night thou shalt be with me in paradise*, he says, that "some have been so troubled with the seeming inconsistency as to venture to suspect the latter words of being an interpolation."\* But, further, the passage before us shows, that Origen did not regard the Gospels as having been exposed to any other causes of error than those common in the transcription of manuscripts; such, for instance, as had operated, and without doubt much more extensively, in the copies of the Septuagint. And, lastly, the language of this passage affords proof, if such proof be needed, that Origen had no disposition to keep out of view, or to extenuate, the differences among the copies of the Gospels extant in his time. We may therefore be satisfied, that none of more importance existed than what we find noticed by him.

It appears, then, that Origen thought the diversities of manuscripts a subject deserving particular attention; that he was rather disposed to complain of the carelessness and rashness of transcribers and revisers, and to exaggerate the discrepancies which had been thus produced; and yet that he never mentions the existence of any more important differences among the copies of the Gospels extant in his time, than such various readings as are found in our present manu-

scripts. He was ignorant, therefore, of any such differences as are supposed in the hypothesis under consideration. But, if unknown to him, they were unknown to other Christians at the time when Origen lived ; that is, during the first half of the third century. They, therefore, did not exist in the manuscripts of this period. But we, at the present day, have manuscripts of the Gospels written at least twelve hundred years since : and, during the first half of the third century, a large portion of all the copies which had ever been made was probably in existence ; some written in the earliest times, and others in succession during the interval. The oldest manuscripts would be sought for by Origen, and other critics contemporary with him ; as they have been by critics since his time. The manuscripts of a later date extant in his age were transcripts of others more ancient, and must have perpetuated their discrepancies. But no important discrepancies were known to Origen ; they were not found in earlier or later copies, extant in his age ; and it is but little more than stating the same thing in other words, to say that they never had existed.

IV. We may reason in a similar manner from all the notices in ancient writers relating to the text of the Gospels. These notices show that no greater difference existed among the manuscripts of the Gospels in their day than exists at present. We may even draw a strong argument from their silence. If there had been narratives or sayings in some copies of the Gospels, not found in the generality, we should have information of it in their works. But, on the contrary, nothing can be alleged from their writings to prove any greater difference among the copies extant in their time than what is found among those which we now possess. The silence of the fathers proves that there was a similar agreement.

V. When we examine the Gospels themselves, there is nothing which discovers marks of their having been subjected to such a process of interpolation as has been imagined. On the contrary, there is evidence which seems decisive that each is the work of an individual, and has been preserved as it was written by him. The dialect, the style, and the modes of narration in the Gospels, generally have a very marked and peculiar character. Each Gospel, also, is distinguished from the others by individual peculiarities in the use of language, and other characteristics exclusively its own. Any one familiar with the originals perceives, for instance, that Mark is a writer less acquainted with the Greek language than Luke, and having less command of proper expression. His style is, in consequence, more affected by the idiom of the Hebrew, more harsh, more unformed, more barbarous, in the technical sense of that word. If you were to transfer into Luke's Gospel a chapter from that of Mark, every critic would at once perceive its dissimilitude to the general style of the former. The difference would be still more remarkable, if you were to insert a portion from Mark in John's Gospel. But the very distinctive character of the style of the Gospels generally, and the peculiar character of each Gospel, are irreconcilable with the notion, that they have been brought to their present state by additions and alterations of successive copiers. A diversity of hands would have produced in each Gospel a diversity of style and character. Instead of the uniformity that now appears, the modes of conception and expression would have been inconsistent and vacillating. We are able to give a remarkable exemplification and proof of this fact. With the exception of a few short passages which have been transferred from one Gospel to another, of the doxology at the end of our Lord's Prayer in Matthew, and of the story of the woman taken in adultery, as inserted in a very few modern manuscripts at the end of the twenty-first chapter of Luke, there have been found but

three *undisputed* interpolations of any considerable length among all the Greek manuscripts of the Gospels; and every one of the three betrays itself to be spurious by its internal character,—by a style of thought and language clearly different from that which characterizes the Gospel in which it has been introduced. This is not a matter of fancy. It is a point which no critic will dispute. If, then, our present Gospels had been the result of successive additions, made by different hands to a common basis, there would have been a marked diversity of style in different portions of the same Gospel; so that these works would have been very unlike what they now are. We should have perceived clear traces of different writers, having greater or less command of expression, accustomed to a different use of language, and viewing the history of Christ under different aspects and with different feelings.

It is true, that in the passage commencing with the fifth verse of the first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, and extending to the end of the second chapter, there is an observable dissimilarity between the language and that of the remainder of his Gospel; so that it forms an exception to the general remarks which have just been made. This circumstance has given occasion for supposing it to be an interpolation. But the true account seems to be, that this passage was a short narrative, in existence before the work of the evangelist, which he incorporated with his Gospel; that, if he found it extant in Greek, he did not essentially modify the style; and, if in Hebrew, that his translation was literal, and affected throughout by the idiom of the original. The events recorded in this portion of his Gospel having taken place, as we believe, about sixty years before he wrote, the supposition is in itself probable; and it explains the character of this particular passage, without affecting the force of the preceding reasoning. On the contrary, this is strengthened by the circumstance, that, where an exception occurs, we can assign

a special and probable cause for it. It may be observed, further, that our being able to perceive so much difference between the language of this portion of St. Luke's Gospel and that of the remainder, shows the general uniformity and marked character of St. Luke's style.

Upon the hypothesis under consideration, it is as probable that the stories collected by various transcribers would have been added to St. John's Gospel, as to any one of the other Gospels. By comparing his Gospel with the other three, we perceive that there were many narratives concerning Christ in existence, which are not contained in the former, and which would have afforded an abundant harvest for an interpolator. But it is obvious that no such additions have been made to St. John's Gospel as are supposed to have been commonly made to the histories of Christ. The modes of thinking, and the style, are uniform throughout, and very marked and distinguishable. It may be separated into a few long divisions, each of which is closely connected within itself; and it contains scarcely any of those short narratives in the style of the other Gospels, among which we must look for the additions which transcribers are supposed to have made to the latter. Such being the facts, it is impossible to believe that this Gospel has ever been essentially corrupted by additions from its copiers. But if this Gospel, equally exposed to corruption with any one of the other three, has not thus suffered from transcribers, we may infer that the same is true of the other three Gospels.

VI. There is also another ground, on which we infer, from the uniformity of style in the several Gospels, and the peculiar character of this style, that they have not been interpolated. The Gospels are written in Hellenistic Greek, a dialect used by Jews imperfectly acquainted with the Greek language, and intimately affected, in consequence, by the influence of the Hebrew. A native Greek could not have

written in this dialect, if he would, without having made it a particular study. Now, it is through the Gentile branch of the early converts that Christianity and the Gospels have been transmitted to us. But we know from the New Testament, that, in the very beginning, there were strong tendencies to schism between the Jewish and Gentile converts. After the death of the apostles, and the destruction of Jerusalem, the former, generally speaking, separated themselves more and more from the latter; they remained strongly attached to their law; they were reputed heretics; they seem to have made little or no use of the books which constitute the New Testament, with the exception of the Gospel of Matthew; and at last, after four or five centuries, they disappear from our view. It would be a very improbable supposition, that any considerable number of the copies of the Gospels used by Gentile Christians were made by Jewish transcribers, or interpolated by Jews. It is not to such copies that we can trace back the lineage of our own. Only a portion of the Jews were acquainted with the Greek language as written; and very few, it is probable, exercised the trade of transcribers in that language. Origen, in attempting to explain the cause of a supposed error, which he believed to have arisen from ignorance of the Hebrew, speaks of the Gospels as having been continually transcribed by Greeks unacquainted with that language.\* But the Gospels are throughout written in Hellenistic Greek. Whatever interpolations may be fancied to exist, they do not discover themselves by being written in pure and common Greek. These fancied interpolations, however, are supposed to have been made by a series of transcribers. But these transcribers, as we have seen, must generally have been Gentiles; and Gentiles would hardly have interpolated in Hebrew-Greek, or, to say the least, would hardly have interpolated in

Hebrew-Greek so uniformly that we should not be able to trace any considerable departure from this dialect.

VII. In those cases in which we have good reason to suspect an ancient writing of being spurious altogether, or of having received spurious additions, the fact is almost always betrayed by something in the character of the writing itself. Spurious works, and interpolations in genuine works, are discovered, for instance, by something not congruous to the character of the pretended author; by a style different from that of his genuine writings; by the expression of opinions and feelings which it is improbable that he entertained; by discovering an ignorance of facts with which he must have been acquainted; by a use of language, and the introduction of modes of conception, not known at the period to which they are assigned; by an implied reference to opinions, events, or even books, of a later age; or by some bearing and purpose not consistent with the time when they are pretended to have been written. Traces of the times when they were really composed are almost always apparent. This must have been the case with the Gospels, if they had been conformed, as has been imagined, to the traditions and doctrines of the Church in the second century. But, putting this notion out of view, we should have perceived distinct traces of a later age than the period assigned for their composition, if they had been subjected to alterations and additions from different editors and transcribers, with different views and feelings, and more or less interested and excited about the opinions and controversies which had sprung up in their own times. But no traces of a later age than that which we assign for their composition appear in the Gospels. He who fairly examines the scanty list of passages which have been produced, as giving some countenance to an opposite opinion, may fully satisfy himself of the correctness of this assertion. I will quote, in proof of it, a passage from Eichhorn, which I am unable to reconcile



with the statements before adduced from him, and with other parts of his writings; but which, evidently, derives additional weight from this inconsistency. In a section "on the credibility" of the Gospels, after mentioning by name Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as the authors of the first three, he thus proceeds:—

"Every thing in their narratives corresponds to the age in which they lived and wrote, and to the circumstances in which we must believe them to have been placed, — an unanswerable proof of their credibility. No one has yet appeared, who, in this respect, has convicted them of want of truth; and, until this be done by satisfactory evidence, their credibility may be confidently maintained."\*

If, then, the Gospels do not bear the impression of later times, but correspond in their character to the age in which we believe them to have been written, this must be regarded as a strong proof that they are genuine, uncorrupted works of that age.

VIII. The character and actions of Jesus Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, are peculiar and extraordinary beyond all example. They distinguish him, in a most remarkable manner, from all other men. They display the highest moral sublimity. We perceive, throughout, an ultimate purpose of the most extensive benevolence. But this character of Christ, which appears in the Gospels, is exhibited with perfect consistency. Whatever he is represented as saying or doing corresponds to the fact or the conception, — call it which we will, — that he was a teacher sent from God, indued with the highest powers, and intrusted with the most important office ever exercised upon earth. The different parts of each Gospel harmonize together. Now, let any one consider how unlikely it is that we should have found this consistency

in the representation of Christ, if the Gospels had been, in great part, the work of inconsiderate or presumptuous copiers ; or if they had consisted, in great part, of a collection of traditionary stories ; and especially if these stories had been, as some have imagined, either fabulous accounts of miracles, or narratives having a foundation in truth, but corresponding so little to the real fact as to have assumed a miraculous character, which there was nothing in the fact itself to justify. It is incredible, that, under such circumstances, there should be the consistency which now appears in the Gospels. On the contrary, we might expect to find in them stories of the same kind with those which were found, or are still found, in certain writings that have been called apocryphal gospels, — stories which betray their falsehood at first view by their incongruity with the character and actions of our Saviour, as displayed by the evangelists. We shall have occasion to notice some of them more particularly hereafter. Every one acquainted with the stories referred to must perceive and acknowledge their striking dissimilitude to the narratives of the Gospels. A dissimilitude of the same kind would have existed between different parts of the Gospels, if they had grown, as has been imagined, to their present form by a gradual contribution of traditionary tales. On the contrary, their consistency in the representation of our Saviour is one among the many proofs that they have been preserved essentially as they were first written.

We have seen, then, in the present chapter, that there is no reason to doubt that the Christians of the first two centuries had the highest reverence for their sacred books ; and that, with this sentiment, they could neither have made nor have suffered alterations in the Gospels ; that the manner in which the Christian fathers speak of the corruptions with which they charged some of the heretics implies, from the nature of the case, that they knew of no similar corruptions in their

own copies of the Gospels; that, from the notice which Origen takes of the various readings found by him in his manuscripts of the Gospels, we may conclude, that no considerable diversity among the manuscripts of the Gospels had ever existed; that we may infer the same from all the other notices respecting the text of the Gospels in the writings of the fathers, and from the absence of any thing in their works which might show that their copies differed more from each other than those now extant; that the peculiar style of the Gospels generally, and the uniform style of each Gospel, afford proof that each is essentially the work of one author, which has been preserved unaltered; that this argument becomes more striking when we consider that far the greater number of the copies of the Gospels, during the first two centuries, were made by Greek transcribers, who, if they had interpolated, would have interpolated in common Greek; that it is from copies made by them that our own are divided, but that the Gospels, as we possess them, are written throughout in that dialect of the Greek which was used only by Jews; that spurious works, or spurious additions to genuine works, may commonly be discovered by some incongruity with the character or the circumstances of the pretended author, or with the age to which they are assigned, but that no such incongruity appears in the Gospels as may throw any doubt upon their general character; and, lastly, that the consistency preserved throughout each of the Gospels in all that relates to the actions, discourses, and most extraordinary character of Christ, shows that each is a work which remains the same essentially as it was originally written, uncorrupted by subsequent alterations or additions.

It has, indeed, been already remarked, that the Gospel of St. Matthew was probably written in Hebrew; and that we

possess only a Greek translation. So far, therefore, as regards this Gospel, a part of the arguments adduced, especially those in the first chapter, apply directly only to prove the uncorrupt preservation of the Greek copy. But I am not aware of any consideration that may lead us to suspect, that the Greek is not a faithful rendering from the Hebrew copy or copies used by the translator, or that the exemplar he followed did not essentially correspond with the original. On the contrary, there seems no reasonable ground for doubt respecting either proposition.

It is true, that the three additions before suggested\* may have been made to the Hebrew text used by the translator. The liability to those accidents that attend the transcription of books was probably increased, in the case of Matthew's Gospel, by a more than ordinary want of skill and judgment in some of its Hebrew copyists; for the transcription of books cannot be supposed to have been an art much practised among the native Jews of Palestine. But the causes of error in the text used by Matthew's translator could have operated but a short time, since we cannot suppose the interval between the composition and translation of the Gospel to have been more than about fifty years.

In regard to the hypothesis we have been considering, of licentious and intentional additions by transcribers, as we have seen that there is no ground for it as regards the Greek Gospels, so we may infer that the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew did not thus suffer during the fifty years after its first appearance. The supposition that it did so, being altogether improbable in itself, would require strong, direct proof to justify us in admitting it; but, on the contrary, there is nothing to set aside the conclusion, founded on the general analogy of other writings, that this Gospel was the work of an individual

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\* See before, pp. 16, 17.

author, and was, during the short interval before its translation, preserved essentially as written by him.

Speaking of the time when the Hebrew original alone was extant, Papias says, that "every one translated it as he could;" meaning, I conceive, that he translated it to himself in reading it. His words, it is evident, directly imply that it was in the hands of readers whose vernacular language was the Greek. Many of the Jewish converts, without doubt, were capable of understanding it both in the Hebrew and the Greek. There were, therefore, contemporary judges of the correspondence of the translation with the original, by whom its correspondence was not questioned; for, had it been, we should have known the fact. Nor is an expression of doubt concerning its authenticity to be found in any subsequent age: on the other hand, controvertists, the most opposed to each other, agreed in using the Greek translation as a common authority.

But the whole supposition of licentious alterations in the Gospels from the text of their original authors must rest on the belief that there was a general indifference among the early Christians about the genuineness and authenticity of the books from which they derived a knowledge of their religion. Those writings they might have preserved uncorrupted, if they would. But such, it must be presumed, was their negligence and folly, that they cared not whether the contents of the Gospels were true or false; whether they proceeded from apostles and evangelists, or from unknown and anonymous individuals. Christians, at the time of which we speak, were submitting to severe privations, and exposing themselves to great sufferings, for their religion. They were supported by a conviction of the infinite value of the truths which it taught, — those truths, the knowledge of which was preserved, as they believed, in the writings of its first disciples.

But, if we suppose the text of any one of the Gospels to have suffered essential alteration, we must suppose that Christians were indifferent about the contents of those books, which they regarded as the authentic records of their faith, their duties, their consolations, and their hopes. It seems, therefore, not too much to say of the hypothesis of the essential corruption of the Gospels, that it is irreconcilable with any just conception of the circumstances and feelings of the early Christians, and of the moral nature of man.

## CHAPTER III.

### OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

UPON what arguments, then, rests the supposition that essential alterations have been made in the Gospels since their original composition? These arguments, whatever they are, if of any force, must assume the character of objections and difficulties, when viewed in relation to the proposition, the truth of which has been maintained. But, strongly as the corruption of the Gospels has been asserted, I am unacquainted with any formal statement of arguments in its proof.

Those by whom it has been principally maintained belong to that large class of German critics who reject the belief of any thing properly miraculous in the history of Christ. But the difficulty of reconciling this disbelief of the miracles with the admission of the truth of facts concerning him not miraculous is greatly increased, if the Gospels be acknowledged as the uncorrupted works of those who were witnesses of what they relate, or who derived their information immediately from such witnesses. On the other hand, in proportion as suspicion is cast upon the genuineness and authenticity of those writings, the history of Christ becomes doubtful and obscure. An opening is made for theories concerning his life, character, and works, and the origin of his religion. Any account of our Saviour, upon the supposition that he was not a teacher from God endued with miraculous powers, must be almost wholly conjectural. But such a conjectural account

will appear to less disadvantage, if placed in competition with narratives of uncertain origin, than if brought into direct opposition to the authority of original witnesses.

The theory of the corruption of the Gospels has been connected with an hypothesis concerning the manner in which the first three Gospels were formed; from which, as I conceive, it has been regarded as deriving its main support. This hypothesis is intended to account for the remarkable phenomena in the agreement and disagreement of the first three Gospels with each other. It has been explained and defended, with much clearness and ability, by Bishop Marsh.\* It supposes the existence of an original document, a brief narrative of the public life of Christ, the Original Gospel of Eichhorn. This document, it is believed, was in the hands of several persons, who added to it different narratives, according to their respective information; so that copies of it were in existence with different additions. Each of the first three evangelists is thought to have used a different copy as the basis of his Gospel. It is then only to suppose, that the same custom of making additions, which was common in regard to the original document just mentioned, prevailed afterwards in regard to the Gospels, and we have the very supposition against which we have been contending.

To this the answer is, that the hypothesis, in any form in which it may be presented, can, at most, be regarded only as creating a presumption that the Gospels have been corrupted; and this presumption would be of no force in opposition to the facts stated in the two preceding chapters. It would only bring suspicion upon the hypothesis itself; since this must be

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\* In his "Dissertation on the Origin and Composition of the Three First Canonical Gospels," and his tracts in the controversy occasioned by an anonymous publication (of which Bishop Randolph was the author) entitled, "Remarks on Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament; by Way of Caution to Students in Divinity."



conformed to all the facts which have a bearing upon it. The latter must not be made to bend to the former. With such a view of the subject, it would be improper, in this place, to enter into a particular examination of the theory in question. Such an examination, however, may be found in one of the additional notes to this volume.\* If the reasoning there urged be correct, it will appear that the hypothesis of an original document gradually receiving additions from different hands, and used in different forms by the first three evangelists, involves suppositions which cannot be admitted; that it is unnecessary in order to account for the agreement of the Gospels with each other; and that it is neither implied, nor rendered probable, by the phenomena to be explained, but that, on the contrary, it is inconsistent with those phenomena.

It may be recollected, that the Original Gospel is regarded by Eichhorn, not only as the common source of our first three Gospels, but likewise of certain apocryphal gospels, which were in use before them.† These, according to him, were the following: The Gospel of the Hebrews; the Gospel of Marcion; the Memoirs by the Apostles, used by Justin Martyr; the gospel adopted by Cerinthus and his sect; gospels used by Tatian in composing his Diatessaron; and those used by the apostolic fathers. These gospels, and our first three Gospels, are all supposed to have been so intimately connected, as to prove their derivation from a common original; and the knowledge which we possess respecting their contents is regarded as illustrating the process of change and growth which they had all gone through. I shall, in the course of this work, remark, under the proper heads, upon the gospels mentioned by Eichhorn, and endeavor to show, that the Gospel of the Hebrews was probably, in its primitive state, the Hebrew original of St. Matthew; that the books used by Justin were our four Gospels; that there is no

See Note B, pp 463-510.

† See before, p. 5, seqq.

reason to doubt, that the *four* gospels, which, toward the end of the second century, Tatian, who had been a disciple of Justin Martyr, made the basis of his Diatessaron, were the four canonical Gospels; that Marcion had a mutilated copy of St. Luke,—a fact which, in consequence of the examinations that have taken place since Eichhorn wrote, seems now to be generally undisputed; that the scanty, uncertain, contradictory information respecting Cerinthus and his sect affords no ground for the conclusion that they used a peculiar gospel; and that there is nothing in the writings ascribed to Apostolic Fathers which may justify the supposition, that, previously to the general reception of our four Gospels, other gospels were in common circulation among Christians as authentic histories of Christ.

It is, moreover, affirmed by Eichhorn as a general truth, that “before the invention of printing, in transcribing a manuscript, the most arbitrary alterations were considered as allowable, since they affected only an article of private property, written for the use of an individual.”\* It follows, that, in maintaining that the Gospels have undergone a process of corruption, one is only maintaining that they shared the common fate of all other ancient writings. In proof of his general proposition, Eichhorn alleges, that there are many manuscripts of chronicles of the Middle Ages, which, purporting to be copies of the same work, yet present different texts, some containing more and others less; and, in further evidence that the most arbitrary alterations by transcribers were considered as allowable, he cites Dionysius of Corinth as calling some who had corrupted his writings apostles of Satan. But the proposition, though apparently laid down as the basis of his hypothesis, is so obviously false as hardly to admit of remark or contradiction.

It could only have been made through some strange inadvertence. As the ordinary mode of dealing with books in ancient times was, as every one knows, the reverse of what Eichhorn supposes, it must need very strong and special reasons to render the conjecture probable, that the Gospels were made exceptions to the common usage.

As evidence that such was the case, that the Gospels were subjected to a mode of treatment different from that which other books experienced, a few passages have been quoted from ancient writers ; which, in fact, form the whole of what can be considered as a direct attempt to prove the proposition. Two of them — one from Dionysius of Corinth, and the other from Origen — we have already had occasion to examine ; and their true bearing appears to be directly opposed to the supposition which they have been brought to establish.\* Two others remain to be considered.

“Celsus,” says Eichhorn, “objects to the Christians, that they had changed their Gospels three times, four times, and oftener, as if they were deprived of their senses.”† The passage is twice quoted by him, and therefore, it may be presumed, is regarded as an important proof of his theory. If it were correctly represented in the words which have been given, the first obvious answer would be, that such a charge is as little to be credited upon the mere assertion of Celsus, as various other calumnies of that writer against the Christians, which no one at the present day believes. But Celsus does not say what he is represented as saying. He does not bring the charge against Christians generally, but against *some* Christians. His words are preserved in the work composed by Origen in reply to Celsus ; and, correctly rendered, are as follows : “Afterwards Celsus says, that some believers, like men driven by drunkenness to commit violence on

\* See before, pp. 38, 39, and p. 43, seqq.

† See before, p. 9.

themselves, have altered the Gospel-history,\* since its first composition, three times, four times, and oftener, and have refashioned it, so as to be able to deny the objections made against it." To this, the whole reply of Origen is as follows: "I know of none who have altered the Gospel-history, except the followers of Marcion, of Valentinus, and I think also those of Lucan. But this affords no ground for reproach against the religion itself, but against those who have dared to corrupt the Gospels. And as it is no reproach against philosophy, that there are Sophists or Epicureans or Peripatetics, or any others who hold false opinions; so also it is no reproach against true Christianity, that there are those who have altered the Gospels, and introduced heresies foreign from the teaching of Jesus." †

It is evident, that Origen regarded the words of Celsus as a mere declamatory accusation, which he was not called upon to repel by any elaborate reply. A grave charge against the whole body of Christians, of the nature of that which Celsus urges, could not have been dismissed in three sentences of a long and able work in defence of Christianity against his attacks. The charge may have been founded, as Origen supposes, upon the mutilations and corruptions of the Gospels made by some heretics. Another solution of it is, that Celsus, being acquainted with the four Gospels, and perceiving that they had much in common with much that was different, did, on this ground, represent Christians as having given the Gospel-history four different forms. But if we believe that Celsus fully understood the subject, and, having no reference to any heretical sects or to the existence of four different histories of Christ, really meant to bring against catholic

\* Literally, *the Gospel*, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον: but this word is here used, as it is elsewhere in ancient writers, to denote the Gospel-history. In this use of the word, the four Gospels are commonly denoted, considered collectively, as containing this history

† Orig. cont. Cels., lib. ii. § 27; Opp. i. 411.

Christians a grave charge of corrupting the Gospels, then we must consider what is the proper inference from the passage. He was, as no one will deny, forward enough in adducing unsupported and calumnious accusations against those whom he was attacking. If there had been any pretence for saying that Christians *generally* had altered and corrupted the Gospels, he would have said it. But he does not. He merely says, whether truly or not may be a question, that *some* Christians had done this. It is of the nature of such a charge, when brought against some of any community, to exculpate the community in general. According, therefore, to the implied testimony of their enemy, Christians, generally speaking, had not altered nor corrupted the Gospels.

But the passage affords ground for further remark. Celsus compares the conduct of those whom he charges with altering the Gospel-history, or the Gospels, to that of men impelled by drunkenness to commit violence on themselves. Origen does not object to the comparison; and there is no objection to be made to the opinion implied in it, respecting the character and consequences of such a procedure. It is one which the friends and the enemies of the religion must equally have perceived to be correct. The question, therefore, whether the early Christians altered the Gospels, resolves itself into the question, whether they acted like men intoxicated, to the evident ruin of their cause.

The other passage, before referred to, is from Clement of Alexandria. "Clement also, at the end of the second century, speaks of those who corrupted the gospels, and ascribes it to them, that at Matt. v. 10, instead of the words, *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, there was found in some manuscripts, *for they shall be perfect*; and in others, *for they shall have a place where they shall not be persecuted*." This statement is erroneous. Clement does not speak of those

who corrupted, but of those who paraphrased, the Gospels; nor does he give the words alleged by him, as various readings in manuscripts of the Gospels. Quoting the original text incorrectly, probably from memory, in these words, — “Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for they shall be called the sons of God,”\* — he adds, “Or, as some who have paraphrased the Gospels express it, Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for they shall be perfect; and, Blessed are they who are persecuted for my sake, for they shall attain a place where they shall not be persecuted.” It is of paraphrasts or scholiasts that the passage is understood by Eichhorn himself, when writing without a view to his peculiar theory.† Clement expresses no indignation against those of whom he speaks, as he would have done if they had corrupted the Gospels. On the contrary, his quoting their words as he does implies a certain degree of approbation.

It is remarkable, that, in understanding his words as proving a general license of corruption during his time, the extraordinary and quite incredible nature of the inference which is to be drawn from them has not been adverted to. If his words were thus to be understood, they would prove, not that transcribers made additions to what they found before them, or occasionally omitted or corrupted a passage, but that they indulged themselves in the most wanton alterations of the plain language of the Gospels. There are few passages less exposed to intentional corruption than the one quoted by Clement; and if this were made to assume three such different forms in the manuscripts which he had seen, and if these changes afforded, as is maintained, a specimen of the common practice of transcribers, it would follow, that the text of the Gospels had, in the time of Clement, undergone great altera-

\* The words are not, as given by Eichhorn, *For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

† Einleit. in d. N. T., ii. 553.

tions, and had assumed a very different character in different manuscripts. There must have been, in his age, an astonishing discordance among different copies of the Gospels. Some must have been very unlike others in their modes of expression, as well as in their contents. But, if this be the legitimate conclusion from the meaning which has been put upon his words, it is only necessary to state it, in order to show that that meaning must be false.

Such are the main arguments in support of the hypothesis of the corruption of the Gospels; or, in other words, such are the objections to the proposition that they remain essentially the same as they were originally composed. The truth of this proposition, it may be recollected, is proved by various considerations, unconnected with each other. It appears from the essential agreement among the very numerous copies of the Gospels, so diverse in their character, and in their mode of derivation from the original. This agreement among different copies could not have existed, unless some archetype had been faithfully followed; and this archetype, it has been shown, could have been no other than the original text. It appears from the reverence in which the Gospels were held by the early Christians, and the deep sense which they had of the impropriety and guilt of making any alteration in those writings. It appears from the historical notices respecting their text, which are wholly inconsistent with the supposition of its having suffered essential corruptions. And, finally, it appears from the internal character of the books themselves, which show no marks of gross, intentional interpolation; but, on the contrary, exhibit a consistency of style and conception irreconcilable with the supposition of it.

If, then, we may consider the proposition as established, that the Gospels remain essentially the same as they were originally composed, the remaining inquiry is, whether they are the works of those to whom they have been ascribed.





## PART II.

**DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE THAT THE GOSPELS HAVE BEEN  
ASCRIBED TO THEIR TRUE AUTHORS.**



## PART II.

### CHAPTER I.

EVIDENCE FROM THE GENERAL RECEPTION OF THE GOSPELS AS GENUINE AMONG CHRISTIANS DURING THE LAST QUARTER OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

HAVING shown that the Gospels have been transmitted to us as they were first written, I shall, in what follows, adduce evidence of the fact that they have been ascribed to their true authors.

The proof which may be first stated is, that they were regarded with the highest reverence, as genuine and sacred books, by the great body of Christians during the last quarter of the second century.

There is little or no dispute about the truth of this proposition, and I might perhaps assume it as established, and proceed to reason upon it; but it may be better to bring forward some of the evidence on which it rests. I have had occasion already to quote, or allude to, a part of it;\* and shall endeavor, as far as possible, to avoid repetition. The passages before given must be viewed in connection with those here alleged.

One of the earliest Christian writers whose works have come down to us is Irenæus. The exact time of his birth is

uncertain; but he was born in the first half of the second century, and but just survived its close. Beside a few fragments of other writings, there is only one of his works which remains to us,—his treatise “Against Heretics,” a name which, in his time, was limited in its application to the different sects of Gnostics and the Ebionites. It was in the name of the great body of catholic believers, and in defence of their opinions, that Irenæus wrote. The first sentence of the following passage has been already quoted:—

“We,” says Irenæus, “have not received the knowledge of the way of our salvation by any others than those through whom the Gospel has come down to us; which Gospel they first preached, and afterwards, by the will of God, transmitted to us in writing, that it might be the foundation and pillar of our faith.”—“For after our Lord had risen from the dead, and they [the apostles] were clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit descending upon them from on high, were filled with all gifts, and possessed perfect knowledge, they went forth to the ends of the earth, spreading the glad tidings of those blessings which God has conferred upon us, and announcing peace from heaven to men; having all, and every one alike, the Gospel of God. Matthew among the Hebrews published a Gospel in their own language; while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel at Rome, and founding a church there. And, after their departure [death], Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself delivered to us in writing what Peter had preached; and Luke, the companion of Paul, recorded the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord who leaned upon his breast, likewise published a Gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus, in Asia. And all these have taught us, that there is one God, the Maker of heaven and earth, announced by the Law and the Prophets; and one Christ, the Son of God. And he who does not assent to them despises indeed those who knew the mind of the Lord; but he despises also Christ himself the Lord, and he despises likewise the Father, and is self-condemned, resisting and opposing his own salvation; and this all heretics do.”\*

In this passage it may be observed, that Irenæus, in defending the Christian doctrine, rests it upon the authority of the Gospels; that he even does this without mentioning the other books of the New Testament; that he considers the former as having been composed, that they might be the foundation and pillar of the faith of Christians; and that he assigns them, without doubt or hesitation, to the authors by whom we believe them to have been written. The following passage is to the same effect:—

“Nor can there be more or fewer Gospels than these. For, as there are four regions of the world in which we live, and four cardinal winds, and the Church is spread over all the earth, and the Gospel is the pillar and support of the Church, and the breath of life; in like manner is it fit that it should have four pillars, breathing on all sides incorruption, and refreshing mankind. Whence it is manifest, that the Logos, the former of all things, who sits upon the cherubim, and holds together all things, having appeared to men, has given us a Gospel fourfold in its form, but held together by one spirit.”—“The Gospel according to John declares his princely, complete, and glorious generation from the Father, saying, ‘In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God; all things were made by him, and without him was nothing made.’”—“The Gospel according to Luke, being of a priestly character, begins with Zacharias, the priest, offering incense to God.”—“Matthew proclaims his human generation, saying, ‘The genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.’”—“Mark begins with the prophetic Spirit, which came down from above to men, saying, ‘The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; as it is written in Isaiah the prophet.’”\*

Here, again, the same remarks may be made as before. The Gospels are expressly assigned to the authors to whom we ascribe them; and they are spoken of as the four pillars of the Church, breathing on all sides incorruption, and refreshing mankind. The figure has been ridiculed; but the

meaning as sufficiently clear, and the want of metaphorical elegance does not affect the present argument.

I pass over other passages, to be found in Lardner, in which Irenæus speaks of the Gospels, referring them to their authors, and remarking generally upon their character and contents. The passages cited by him from the Gospels, many of which are cited more than once, may be found collected in Massuet's edition of his works. They fill about eleven closely printed folio columns; while the passages cited from all the Old Testament fill about fifteen such columns. He appeals to the Gospels continually; and quotes them as undoubted authority for the faith of the great body of Christians, with the same confidence which might be felt by any writer of the present day. They were books in general circulation, and commonly studied.

Such is the information afforded by Irenæus concerning the general reception of the Gospels in his time. He had spent some portion of the earlier part of his life in Asia; but was, at the time when he wrote, bishop of Lyons, in Gaul.

From Gaul we return to Asia. Theophilus, whom I shall next quote, was bishop of Antioch before the year 170, and died before the end of the second century. Of his writings, we have remaining only one work, containing an account and defence of Christianity, addressed to Autolycus, a heathen. After some mention of the Jewish Law and Prophets, he has this passage: "Concerning the righteousness of which the Law speaks, the like things are to be found also in the Prophets and Gospels, because they all spoke by the inspiration of one spirit of God."\* The estimation in which the Gospels were held by Christians appears as well in the passage just quoted as in the following: "These things," says Theophilus, "the Holy Scriptures teach us, and all who

were moved by the Spirit; among whom John says, 'In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God.'"\* Having quoted a passage from the Old Testament (Prov. iv. 25, 26), which he interprets as a precept of chastity, he says, "But the Evangelic voice teaches purity yet more imperatively," and then quotes Matt. v. 28 and 32 in proof of his assertion.† A little after, he quotes several precepts from Matthew and from St. Paul; introducing those taken from the Gospel of Matthew with the expression, "The Gospel says."‡

From Antioch we pass to Carthage. Here Tertullian was born, and here he appears principally to have resided. The dates of his birth and death are both uncertain; but he became distinguished as a writer about the close of the second century. No evidence can be more full and satisfactory than that which he affords of the general reception of the Gospels, and of their authority as the foundation of the Christian faith. He ascribes them without hesitation to the authors by whom we believe them to have been written; and he rests the proof of their genuineness upon unbroken tradition in the churches founded by the apostles. There is not a chapter in the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, from which he does not quote; and from most of them his quotations are numerous. "We lay it down," says Tertullian, "in the first place, that the Evangelic Document§ had for its authors apostles, to whom this office of promulgating the Gospel was assigned by our Lord himself. And, if some of them were companions of apostles, yet they did not stand alone, but were connected with and guided by apostles." — "Among the apostles, John and Matthew form the faith within us. Among

\* I. b. ii § 22.

† Lib. iii § 13.

‡ Ibid., § 14.

§ *Evangelicum instrumentum* "Instrumentum" is here used, as it is often by Tertullian, in a metaphorical sense, derived from its technical meaning, as signifying a legal instrument which may be produced in evidence.

the companions of the apostles, Luke and Mark renovate it.”\* The Gospels are always appealed to by him as decisive authority for the faith of Christians. The evangelists and apostles are placed by him, as they are by Irenæus and Theophilus, in the same rank with the Jewish prophets. In his time, the Scriptures, among which the Gospels held the first place, were publicly read, as at the present day, in the assemblies of Christians. “We come together,” he says, “to bring to mind the divine Scriptures, for the purpose of warning or admonition, if the state of the times require it. Certainly, we nourish our faith, raise our hopes, and confirm our trust, by the sacred words.”† The Christian Scriptures were accessible to all. In one of his writings, a defence of Christians addressed to heathens, he says, “Examine the words of God, our literature, which we are far from concealing, and which many accidents throw in the way of those who are not of our number.”‡ He then quotes two passages from these Scriptures, one from the Gospels, and another from the Epistles, in evidence of what Christians believed to be their duty in regard to civil government.

In defending the genuine Gospel of Luke against the mutilated gospel used by Marcion, Tertullian has the following passage, a part of which has been already quoted: “To give the sum of all, if it be certain, that *that* is most genuine which is most ancient, that most ancient which has been from the beginning, and that from the beginning which was from the apostles; so it is equally certain that *that* was delivered by the apostles which has been held sacred in the churches of the apostles.” He then enumerates various churches founded by apostles, which were still flourishing, and proceeds: “I affirm, then, that in those churches, and not in those only which were founded by the apostles, but

\* Advers. Marcionem, lib. iv. § 2, p. 414.

† Apologet., § 39, p. 81.

‡ Ibid., § 31, p. 27.



in all which have fellowship with them, that Gospel of Luke which we so steadfastly defend has been received from its first publication." — "The same authority," he adds, "of the apostolic churches will support the other Gospels, which, in like manner, we have from them, conformably to their copies."

We will pass from Carthage to Alexandria, the residence of Clement. Here was a celebrated school for the instruction of Christians, founded, probably, early in the second century, of which Clement was, in his time, the principal master. He was eminent during the latter part of the second and the beginning of the third century.

In the evidence which Clement affords of the general reception of the Gospels as sacred books, there is nothing of a peculiar character. It is similar to that already adduced from Irenæus and Tertullian. His very numerous quotations from the Gospels in his extant works are, at the present day, an important means of settling their true text. In one passage, he proposes, after showing that "the Scriptures which we [Christians] have believed are confirmed by the Omnipotent," "to evince from them, in opposition to all heretics, that there is one God and Almighty Lord, clearly proclaimed by the Law and the Prophets, and, together with them, by the blessed Gospel." † This affords a specimen of the manner in which the Gospels are appealed to by him. In another place, in reasoning against certain heretics, he notices a saying ascribed to Christ, quoted by them in support of their opinions from an apocryphal book, called "The Gospel according to the Egyptians;" and commences his answer with this remark: "In the first place, we have not that saying in the four Gospels which have been handed down to us." ‡ Here, in a few words, he expresses his sense of the

\* *Advers. Marcionem*, lib. iv. § 5, pp. 415, 416.

† *Stromat.*, lib. iv. § 1, p. 564.

‡ *Ibid.*, lib. iii. § 13, p. 553.

exclusive authority of the Gospels as histories of our Saviour; and the fact of their reception before his time. The Gospels had been *handed down* to the Christians of his age; that is, the Christians who lived about the end of the second century. By Clement was preserved, as has been before stated, a tradition received from ancient presbyters concerning the order in which they were written. According to this tradition, "The Gospels containing the genealogies were written first. The following providence gave occasion to that of Mark. While Peter was publicly preaching the word at Rome, and through the power of the Spirit making known the Gospel, his hearers, who were numerous, exhorted Mark, upon the ground of his having accompanied him for a long time, and having his discourses in memory, to write down what he had spoken; and Mark, composing his Gospel, delivered it to those who made the request. Peter, knowing this, was not earnest either to forbid or to encourage it. In the last place, John, observing that the things obvious to the senses had been clearly set forth in those Gospels, being urged by his friends, and divinely moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel."\*

In the second century, but how long before its close cannot be determined, Celsus wrote against Christianity. About the middle of the third century, his work was answered by Origen, who speaks of him as long since dead;† and who evidently was unable, confidently, to identify him with any known individual. Origen seems to have observed upon every important particular contained in it, and has given many extracts from it. It appears from these extracts, that Christians, in the time of Celsus, had histories of our Saviour, which they believed to have been written by his

Apud Euseb. II E, lib vi. c. 14. Comp. lib. ii. c. 16.

† Cont. Cels. Præfat., § 4, Opp. i. 317.

disciples, and the genuineness of which was not controverted by him. Without mentioning their authors by name, he frequently quotes and refers to them. It has been observed with truth, that an abridgment of the history of Jesus, corresponding to that in the Gospels, may be found in the remains of his work. He discusses the account of the miraculous birth of Christ, remarking various particulars related in the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel. He refers to the appearance and voice from heaven at our Lord's baptism. He alludes to the account of his temptation. He says that he collected "ten or eleven publicans and sailors," with whom he travelled about "procuring a shameful and beggarly subsistence." He calls Christ himself a carpenter.\* He speaks of his miracles, of his having cured the lame and blind, fed a multitude with a few loaves, and raised the dead; and argues upon the supposition that these facts really took place. He says it was a fiction of his disciples, that Jesus foreknew and foretold whatever should befall him. He refers to the prediction of our Saviour, that deceivers should come in his name. He animadverts upon various passages in our Lord's discourses: upon his direction to his first disciples to exercise a peculiar trust in the providence of God, *to observe the lilies and the ravens*; † upon his precept, *If any man strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also*; upon his saying, *It is impossible to serve two masters*; and upon his declaration, *It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God*. He refers to the incredulity with which he was heard, and to his denunciations against the Pharisees. He speaks of his having been betrayed by one disciple, and denied by another; of his prayer, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*; of the soldiers who derided him; of the purple robe, the crown of thorns, and the reed which was

\* Mark vi. 8.

† Luke xii. 24, 27.

put into his hand; of the vinegar mixed with bitter drugs, offered him at his crucifixion; of his saying, *I thirst*; of the loud cry which he uttered just before expiring; of the earthquake and darkness which accompanied his death; of his rising from the dead; of the angel who removed the stone at the door of the sepulchre; of his appearing, not to his enemies, but to a "distracted woman" (Mary Magdalene) and "others, engaged with him in the same magical arts;" and of his exhibiting his hands, as they had been wounded on the cross, which last circumstance is mentioned by St. John alone.\*

In one passage, Celsus says that those who had given genealogies of Jesus had had the confidence to derive his descent from the first man, and from the Jewish kings; referring to the genealogies found in the first two chapters of Matthew and in Luke. In another passage, he appears to refer at once to all our four Gospels; for he observes, that "some relate that one, and some that two, angels descended to his sepulchre to announce to the women that Jesus was risen." Matthew and Mark speak of but one angel: Luke and John mention two.

The numerous objections of Celsus to the accounts received by Christians respecting our Saviour are always made to accounts found in the Gospels. After remarking upon several passages, he says, "These things are from your own books, for we need no other testimony. Thus you fall by your own hands." He nowhere implies the existence of any narrative respecting Christ, as believed by Christians, which is not related by the evangelists.†

That the histories of Christ referred to by Celsus were our present Gospels, appears from the general correspondence of

\* John xx. 27.

† For the references to the passages quoted above, see Lardner's *Ancient Heathen Testimonies*, chap. xviii.; Works (4to ed.), iv. 113, seqq.

their contents; from the particular coincidences which have been pointed out; from their identity with the Gospels being constantly implied by Origen, without the appearance of his entertaining any doubt upon the subject; from their being attacked by Celsus as the acknowledged records of the religion; and from the impossibility that in his time there should have existed a set of books bearing this character, which have been forgotten, and superseded by another set.

But, in attacking these books, — that is, our present Gospels, — Celsus evidently considered himself to be undermining the foundations of Christianity; to be attacking books regarded by Christians as of the highest authority, — as the authentic records of the history of their Master, composed or sanctioned by his immediate disciples. We have, then, the evidence of an enemy of our religion, that the Gospels were thus regarded by the Christians of his age.

Origen was born about the year 185, and died about the year 254. There was no Christian writer whose authority was so high in his own time, and in the period immediately following. His works, only a small portion of which remains in their original language, — the Greek, — were very numerous. He was eminent for his talents, and for the extent of his learning. Nor was he less distinguished for his piety, his integrity, and his scrupulous conscientiousness. He was also, as I have before observed, a careful critic of the text of the Septuagint and of the New Testament. In those of his works which are still extant in the original, the Gospels are quoted so frequently, that, supposing all other copies of them to be lost, those of Matthew, Luke, and John might be restored almost entire from his quotations alone, if we had a clue by which to arrange them. In speaking of the history of their composition, he professes to give what he had “learnt by tradition concerning the four Gospels, which alone are received without controversy by the Church of God under heaven.”

He says, "The Gospel of Matthew, who, from being a tax-gatherer, became an apostle of Christ, was the first written. It was composed in Hebrew, and published for the use of Jewish believers. Mark next wrote his Gospel, conformably to the accounts which he had received from Peter. Hence, Peter, in his catholic Epistle, acknowledges him as his son, saying, *The sister church in Babylon salutes you; also, my son Mark.* The Gospel of Luke, that which is praised by St. Paul, was the third, and was composed for Gentile believers. Last of all followed that of John."\* Elsewhere Origen writes thus: "We may, then, be bold to say, that the Gospel† is the prime fruit of all the Scriptures." — "Of the Scriptures which are in common use, and which are believed to be divine by all the churches of God, one would not err in calling the Law of Moses the first fruit, and the Gospel the prime fruit."‡ — "The Gospels are, as it were, the elements of the faith of the Church, of which elements the whole world that is reconciled to God by Christ consists."§ I have before had occasion to quote a passage in which Origen speaks of the Scriptures as "books in the most common use."||

Origen, as we have seen, speaks of the Gospels as "re-

\* Apud Euseb. Hist. Eccles., lib. vi. c. 25.

† By the Gospel, here, as elsewhere, is to be understood the Gospel-history, or the four Gospels.

‡ Comment. in Joan., tom. i § 4; Opp. iv. p. 4. Conformably to Origen's meaning, and to the proper sense of the terms, I have rendered *πρωτόγεννημα*, *first fruit*, and *ἀπαρχή*, *prime fruit*. These words were borrowed by him from the Septuagint, and denote two different kinds of oblations, both of which, in our Common Version, are indiscriminately called "first fruits." By *πρωτόγεννημα*, *first fruit*, is meant that first produced, of which an offering was made on the day after the Passover (Lev. xxiii. 10-14). By *ἀπαρχή*, *prime fruit*, is meant the best of the harvest, which was to be set aside for the priests, and from which an offering was to be made on the day of Pentecost, and perhaps at the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 15-20; Numb. xviii. 12, 13; Deut. xviii. 4). "We must understand," says Origen, "that the *prime fruit* and the *first fruit* are not the same. For the *prime fruit* was offered after the harvest, but the *first fruit* before."

§ Ibid., § 6, p. 5.

|| See before, p. 32.

ceived without controversy," and as "believed by all the churches of God." If these expressions were to be interpreted, with the narrowest limitation, as relating only to the state of things at the precise time when he wrote, we might still infer that the Gospels had been received as of equal authority in the last quarter of the second century; since nothing had occurred during the short intervening period to produce a unanimity which did not then exist. If there had been any dissension or difference of opinion then, it is impossible that unanimity should have been afterwards produced without some controversy or discussion, without some trace remaining of the change from one state of opinion to another; but nothing of this sort appears. Origen, however, in the expressions which he uses, does not refer to his own time alone. His language is meant to include all Christians, from the first promulgation<sup>1</sup> of the Gospels. It appears from the writings of the fathers generally, that the books which Christians received as sacred books of the highest authority were, as they believed, distinguished from all others pretending to the same character, by the circumstance that they had been unanimously so received from the apostolic age through every successive generation of catholic Christians.

In estimating the weight of evidence which has thus far been adduced for the genuineness of the Gospels, we must keep in mind, what has not always been sufficiently attended to, that it is not the testimony of certain individual writers alone on which we rely, important as their testimony might be. These writers speak for a whole community, every member of which had the strongest reasons for ascertaining the correctness of his faith respecting the authenticity, and consequently the genuineness, of the Gospels. We quote the Christian fathers, not chiefly to prove their individual belief, but in evidence of the belief of the community to which they belonged. It is not, therefore, the simple testimony of Ire-

næus and Theophilus and Tertullian and Clement and Origen which we bring forward : it is the testimony of thousands and tens of thousands of believers, many of whom were as well informed as they were on this particular subject, and as capable of making a right judgment. All these believers were equally ready with the writers who have been quoted, to affirm the authority and genuineness of the Gospels. The most distinguished Christians of the age, men held in high esteem by their contemporaries and successors, assert that the Gospels were received as genuine throughout the community of which they were members, and for which they were writing. That the assertion was made by such men, under such circumstances, is sufficient evidence of its truth. But the proof of the general reception of the Gospels does not rest upon their assertions only, though these cannot be doubted. It is necessarily implied in their statements and reasonings respecting their religion. It is impossible that they should have so abundantly quoted the Gospels, as conclusive authority for their own faith and that of their fellow-Christians, if these books had not been regarded by Christians as conclusive authority. We cannot infer more confidently from the sermons of Tillotson and Clarke the estimation in which the Gospels were held in their day, than we may infer from the writers before mentioned, that they were held in similar estimation during the period when they lived.

The testimony to the genuineness of the Gospels is therefore distinct in its character from that which may be adduced to prove the genuineness of ancient profane writings. As testimony to this, we are able, perhaps, to collect from different authors a few passages, in which the writing in question is quoted as the work of the individual to whom it is ascribed, or in which it is expressly affirmed that he composed such a work. We may even find it mentioned as his work in some other composition, ascribed to the same individual ; but this alone does not affect the nature of the evidence, since the



genuineness of the last-mentioned writing remains to be proved, and, as far as testimony is concerned, can be proved only by the testimony of individual writers. But these writers do not speak in the name and with the sanction of a whole community, every member of which was deeply and personally concerned in the question whether the book were genuine or not. They give their testimony simply as individuals; and they were, for the most part, individuals who had no interest in ascertaining the truth, and perhaps little curiosity about it. We have commonly no ground for supposing, that any circumstance had led them to a scrupulous examination of the claims of the work. We have no certainty that its genuineness was not doubted by others, equally well informed with the authors whom we quote. But such is not the character of the historical evidence produced for the genuineness of the Gospels. The whole community of Christians is brought to testify their belief respecting a subject which deeply interested them, and about which, as we shall now proceed to observe, they were in circumstances to be fully informed.

That Christians during the latter part of the second century had sufficient means of determining whether the Gospels were genuine or not, may appear from the consideration, that they must have been acquainted with the history of the promulgation of these books. If the Gospels were the works of those to whom they are ascribed, they had been received as such by the contemporaries of the evangelists,—by apostles, and the companions and disciples of apostles. They had been handed down by them to succeeding Christians, as the authentic histories of their Master. There had been a clear, unbroken, and therefore incontrovertible acknowledgment of their genuineness, during the period of somewhat more than a century which had elapsed between the time when the earliest of them was written, and the time to which we have

clearly traced back their general reception. Such must have been the state of the case upon the supposition of their genuineness; but their history, whatever it were, must have been very different, if they were not genuine. In the latter case, they had not been known as the works of their pretended authors by the contemporaries of those to whom they were afterwards ascribed. They had not, consequently, been handed down from the first to the second generation of Christians as the works of those individuals. But, during the latter part of the second century, the only satisfactory evidence of their genuineness, that which the case necessarily demanded, must have been their general acknowledgment as genuine since the time of their supposed composition. This is the proof on which the Christian fathers, and consequently the proof on which the Christian community, relied: and it is of some importance to observe, that they relied upon this alone; that the earlier writers of whom we speak bring forward no other argument in support of their belief. Those facts in the history of the Gospels which must have been of common notoriety were decisive of the question. On the one hand, if the facts necessary to prove their genuineness had really existed, the evidence was incontrovertible: on the other hand, if these facts had not existed, every other pretended proof of the genuineness of the books must have been wholly unsatisfactory.

But the Christians of the latter half of the second century could not be ignorant of the history of the Gospels, or, in other words, of the manner in which they had been regarded by their predecessors. From the statements which have been quoted from different writers, we may fairly take the year 175 as a period when, as shown by direct historical evidence, the Gospels were generally received among Christians. But the old men of this period were born about the end of the first and the beginning of the second century. During their youth, they had been contemporary with those who had been

contemporary with the apostles and the other disciples of Christ himself, and who might have received immediate instruction from them. Irenæus informs us, that he had listened to the discourses of Polycarp, who had been a disciple of St. John, and conversant with others who had seen the Lord.\* This fact is important, as it respects the value of the individual testimony of Irenæus to the genuineness of the Gospels. But it is also to be regarded as a particular exemplification of a general truth, about which there can be no dispute, — that it needed but a single link in the chain of succession, to connect the old men of the time of Irenæus with the apostolic age. Such being the case, the Christians of his time could not be ignorant of the manner in which the Gospels had been regarded by their predecessors; and, in his time, the belief of the genuineness of the Gospels was established throughout the Christian community.

But Christians at that period, equally with Christians at the present day, must have considered the question of the genuineness of the Gospels as one of great importance. If a book be offered to us as of the highest authority, there is no man who will not ask what claim it has to this authority, and upon what proofs its claim is founded. There was every thing in the circumstances of the early Christians to give strength to this desire for information and evidence. In embracing a new religion, they must have felt the strongest interest concerning all that related to its character and history. This religion did not then, as it does at the present day, constitute the prevailing faith, nor blend itself with the opinions, belief, sentiments, and customs of the age. It stood in opposition to all that was established. Every thing connected with it was rendered prominent and striking by the contrast, and

Irenæi Epi-t. ad Florin., apud Euseb. H. E., lib. v. c. 20; Contra Hæres., lib. iii. c. 3, § 4, p. 176.

became a subject of earnest attention, an object of attack and defence. The early Christians were separated from other men. Their religion snapt asunder the ties of common intercourse. It called them to a new life; it gave them new sentiments, hopes, and desires, — a new character; it demanded of them such a conscientious and steady performance of duty as had hardly before been conceived of; it subjected them to privations and insults, to uncertainty and danger; it required them to prepare for torments and death. Every day of their lives, they were strongly reminded of it, by the duties which it enforced, and the sacrifices which it cost them. Their external circumstances, and their connections with this world, instead of distracting their thoughts from it, as is the common tendency of our relations to the present life, kept it constantly pressed upon their attention. In this state of things, it cannot be supposed that they were indifferent about the genuineness of those records on which their faith rested. They must have felt, at least as strongly as we do, the fundamental importance of the subject. But respecting the history and genuineness of those records, if what has been stated be correct, they could not have been ignorant if they would.

In estimating the value of the testimony of the Christian community during the latter part of the second century, it is well to consider the intellectual and moral character of those of whom it was composed.

Our religion, at the time to which we refer, was not so corrupted as greatly to weaken its power over the affections and moral principles of those by whom it was held; and there is no doubt, that the Christians of the second and third centuries were, as a body, distinguished from the world around them by their moral superiority, and by virtues which scarcely existed beyond the limits of their community. They were not, as some have pretended, an illiterate people. They had among them a full share, to say the least, of the learning and

intellectual improvement of the age. From the middle of the second century, they abounded in writers, many of whose works are lost; but many which remain give proof of more than common learning and vigor of intellect. There is a tendency to speak of the Christian fathers with a disrespect wholly unmerited by those of the first ages. During the latter part of the second and the first half of the third century,—that is, from the time when Irenæus wrote till that of Origen's death,—though the Christians were much fewer in number than the heathens, yet the Christian writers, as a body, have far higher claims to intellectual distinction than the heathen. After the period last mentioned, as Christians increased in number, their intellectual ascendancy, of course, became more conspicuous, and, at the same time, less extraordinary.

By a community of this character, in the last quarter of the second century, the Gospels were received as genuine. There was no controversy nor difference of opinion on the subject within its limits.

But, in addition to what has been said, it happens that we are able to produce a striking confirmation of the testimony of the early Christians to the genuineness of the Gospels, by ascertaining, with a high degree of probability, the correctness of this testimony in regard to other books of the Christian Scriptures, from a distinct source of evidence. It is well known, that all our present books of the New Testament were not, during the first ages, received as of equal authority. Some were universally acknowledged as belonging to the class of sacred books, while others were not; the genuineness or the value of the latter being doubted or denied by a greater or less portion of the Christian community. The books universally received as genuine and sacred were the following, twenty in number: The four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the thirteen Epistles of St. Paul (exclusive of the Epistle to

the Hebrews), the first Epistle of John, and the first of Peter. For the genuineness of more than half of this number, we have evidence of a peculiar kind. It is that which is so ably stated by Paley, in his "*Horæ Paulinæ*," arising from the undesigned coincidences which appear upon comparing together the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul.\* In respect to the Acts, and most of the Epistles of St. Paul, this species of evidence, in connection with all the other proof, internal and external, which bears upon the same point, is abundantly sufficient to put the question to rest. The genuineness of three of his Epistles, it is true,—those to Timothy and Titus,—has been attacked by some of the German theologians. But, putting these aside for the present, there are ten Epistles of St. Paul, and the Acts of the Apostles, the genuineness of which we may consider as established. Out of twenty books which the early Christians have transmitted to us as unquestionably genuine, there are

\* This statement, so far as it respects the Acts of the Apostles, requires a few words of explanation.

Paley's argument goes directly to prove the genuineness of the Epistles of Paul; for they assume to be his compositions. But it does not go *directly* to prove the genuineness of the Acts of the Apostles; for this book does not assume to be the work of Luke, whose name is not mentioned in it

But Paley's argument proves the truth of the history contained in this book. And the book, it appears from the frequent use in it of the first person plural, was written by a companion of St. Paul.

Such being the case, the book being authentic, and being written by a companion of St. Paul, there is no supposable mistake, which might have led the early Christians to ascribe it to any other than its true author. And they unanimously ascribed it to Luke. Throughout the whole of antiquity, there is no suggestion of any other author, nor an intimation of doubt that Luke was the author.

In confirmation of this reasoning, if it need confirmation, we find Luke repeatedly mentioned by St. Paul as his companion and friend. He calls him (Coloss. iv. 14), "Luke, the beloved physician." He sends to Philemon (ver. 24) a salutation from him as one of his "fellow-laborers." And in his last Epistle to Timothy, written just before his martyrdom, speaking of being deserted by one and left by others, he says (iv. 11), "Luke alone is with me."

eleven which are unquestionably genuine. There are eleven, for the genuineness of which we have strong proof, of a kind wholly distinct from their testimony. We have a peculiar means of testing the value of our witnesses, in regard to a most important part of their evidence; and by this test their correctness is fully established. But the greater the number of books the genuineness of which is admitted, by whatever means this be proved, the greater the presumption that the testimony of the early Christians may be relied upon; or, in other words, that all the books of the New Testament which they received as unquestionably genuine are in fact genuine.

This proposition being granted, I think that he who will examine the subject may fully satisfy himself that the Epistles to Timothy and Titus were written by St. Paul. I think he will find no reason to doubt, that the two catholic Epistles before mentioned—the first of John and the first of Peter—were the works of the apostles to whom they are ascribed. With regard to them, there is, to say the least, nothing to detract from the credit due to the authority of the early Christians. But if he should come to the conclusion, that all these books, with those before mentioned, are genuine; that sixteen out of the twenty received by the early Christians are genuine,—he can hardly refuse to admit, that there is a very strong presumption in favor of the genuineness of the remaining four; these four, the Gospels, being the most important of all.

We have hitherto considered the subject as if the early Christians, whose testimony has been adduced, might have had a firm belief of the truth of their religion, unconnected with a belief of the genuineness of the Gospels. There is nothing in the nature of things to render this supposition incredible. But it is a fact deserving particular attention,

that the one belief was, in their minds, identified with the other. Their faith in Christianity was an assurance of the truth of the accounts respecting Christ recorded by the four evangelists. It was a belief, that he was such as he was represented to be by them; and that he taught the truths, and inculcated the precepts, preserved in their writings. What was to be learnt from the four Gospels was the object of a Christian's faith; and no other source of instruction came in competition with them. They were, as Irenæus expresses it, "the pillar and support of the Church." They were, in the view of the Christians of his age, *the Gospel*, transmitted in writing, through the appointment of God, by those who had been commissioned to preach it.\* To be a Christian, then, was to believe what was recorded in the Gospels; or, in other words, it was to believe the credibility of these books. But these books were believed to be credible, because they were believed to be genuine; to be the works of eye-witnesses, or of those who derived their information from eye-witnesses; histories, all of which had apostolic authority, because they were written by apostles, or sanctioned by apostles. Supposing any doubt to have been cast upon their genuineness, the same doubt would have extended to their credibility. If they did not appear till after the apostolic age, a false character had been ascribed to them; and their whole contents would, in consequence, become suspicious. Every attestation, therefore, given by a Christian of his belief in his religion, was an attestation of his belief in the credibility and the genuineness of the four Gospels. It was in consequence and in testimony of this belief, that he lived as a Christian, and was prepared to die as a martyr. But his belief in the genuineness of the Gospels was a belief of an historical fact. It did not regard a matter of opinion or interpretation. At the same time, it lay at the foundation

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\* See before, p. 72.



of his religious faith. It was the first point to be settled in becoming a believer. The conversion, the virtues, and the sufferings of the early Christians, all, therefore, bear testimony to their firm belief of this fact; it was a fact respecting which they had the strongest interest in not being deceived; and such, as we have seen, was the information necessarily possessed by them, that, in the exercise of common good sense, they could not be in error.

But even putting out of view those considerations which have been brought forward to explain the value of the testimony of the Christian community, during the last quarter of the second century, to the genuineness of the Gospels, it may be shown, that the general reception of these books during the period in question is to be accounted for only by admitting their genuineness.

Before attending to those considerations which may show the truth of this proposition in regard to the Gospels generally, we will advert to some circumstances which respect only the first three. These, when compared together, present phenomena, of which, if their genuineness be denied, no solution can be given, not irreconcilable with the fact of the reception of all three as books of the highest authority. The phenomena referred to consist in the frequent instances of verbal agreement among them, and in their correspondence with one another in the selection and narration of the same events, viewed in connection with their disagreements and individual peculiarities. The common reception of the first three Gospels, and the appearances which these writings present, must be regarded together. When thus regarded, they prove the genuineness of the books in question; because, upon the opposite supposition, no explanation can be given

of these appearances not inconsistent with the fact of their common reception. This is the point to which we will now attend.

If it be maintained that the first three Gospels are the compositions of writers who lived after the apostolic age, then, at first view, three suppositions may present themselves as affording a solution of the phenomena which have been mentioned. One writer may have copied from another, or from both of the others; or each writer may have made use of some written document or documents which had much in common with those used by the other two, though in many respects dissimilar; or they may all have derived their accounts from tradition, the traditions preserved by one being partly the same with those preserved by another, and partly different. We will examine in order each of these solutions.

I. The supposition that the author of any one of the first three Gospels copied from either of the others, has, in modern times, been subjected to very thorough examination. It has been found exposed to great, and, as may seem, insuperable objections, which show themselves on comparing together the contents of the first three Gospels. Some of these objections are stated in another place.\* But, under the conditions of the case now before us, — that is, in connection with the belief that the Gospels were written after the apostolic age, — the supposition is liable to peculiar objections, which alone it is necessary to consider at present.

These objections may be shown by applying them to a particular instance; it being kept in mind that they are applicable to any other which may be presented. Let us suppose, then, that the author of the Gospel ascribed to Luke made use of that ascribed to Matthew, and derived from it

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\* See Note B, pp. 463-510.

the large portion of matter which his history has in common with it. The question then arises, What was his purpose in composing his own work? He must have intended to give a better, a more authentic, or a more plausible history than that ascribed to Matthew, — one which might more effectually serve the end proposed in such a work, whatever that were. It must have been his purpose to remodel the gospel before existing; to arrange its contents in suitable order; and to omit, correct, and add, according to his superior information, skill, and judgment. The general character of both histories is strikingly the same; they correspond with each other in the greater part of their contents; and, if the writer of that ascribed to Luke took that ascribed to Matthew for the basis of his own work, all change, addition, or omission must appear to be intentional correction or improvement. The former work must have been a refashioning of the latter, with the purpose of removing its errors, and supplying its deficiencies. The object of the author of the new history, therefore, was to produce a work which ought to supersede the old. But this is inconsistent with the fact, that those who received his Gospel as authentic received also that ascribed to Matthew as of equal authority; and those who revered that ascribed to Matthew made no hesitation in admitting that ascribed to Luke as also entitled to the rank of a sacred book. If the writer of the gospel ascribed to Luke intended to give a better or more serviceable history than that ascribed to Matthew, he would have been considered either as having succeeded or as having failed. In comparison with the latter work, his own must either have been preferred or rejected. If we imagine that, when he wrote, the gospel afterwards ascribed to Matthew was already regarded as the composition of that apostle, little favor would have been shown to the author of a pretended revision of such a work, and his book would have obtained little currency. If, at the time when he wrote, the gospel afterwards ascribed to

Matthew were regarded as having no claim to higher authority than his own might pretend to, then the two histories would have come in competition, and it cannot be supposed that both would have been received as of equal authority and worth.

Supposing the first three Gospels to have been composed after the apostolic age, or, in other words, if their genuineness be denied, it is obvious that similar arguments may be brought to prove that the author of no one of them made use of either of the other two, in such a manner as to explain the correspondence between their writings. The use supposed is inconsistent with the fact of the common reception of all of them as sacred books of the highest authority.

II. We will, then, examine the next solution which has been mentioned. It may be said, that the authors of the first three Gospels each made use of a written document or documents; and that the documents respectively used by them had much common and corresponding matter, and much verbal agreement, but that they were distinguished from one another by many individual peculiarities.

In respect to this supposition, let us consider of what character those documents must have been. They were not separate narratives of single events, real or supposed, in the life of Christ. It cannot be believed, that, after the apostolic age, the history contained in the first three Gospels was, before their composition, circulating among Christians in many separate written fragments. Whoever was desirous of obtaining one written account of an event, or supposed event, in the life of Christ, would be desirous of obtaining more. He would extend his collection, and arrange it, if he did not find a collection arranged to his hands. The coincidence between the Gospels ascribed to Mark and Luke in the order of the events which they have in common shows that the authors of these Gospels, if they followed written docu-

ments, must have copied documents in which the events were already thus arranged. The writer of the Gospel ascribed to Luke says, that many before him had undertaken to prepare accounts of Christ; and, whether we do or do not believe the Gospel to be the work of Luke, there can be no reason for doubting the truth of this information.

The documents in question, then, must have been different histories of Christ, different gospels, in existence before our first three Gospels. Such writings, when once in existence, would soon be widely circulated. Now, upon the supposition that the first three Gospels were composed after the apostolic age out of such documents, each of them was nothing more than a particular compilation of the same kind with those already existing, made by some unknown individual, who has left no trace of his history. Each of these new collections, likewise, was incomplete; for each of the first three Gospels wants much that is found in the other two, and in the Gospel of John, — to say nothing of what may have existed in any of the supposed earlier gospels. There are discrepancies between them, and they present very considerable difficulties when compared together. There could be no reason, therefore, why any individual, who had possessed a more ancient collection, should reject that to which he had been accustomed, in order to substitute these three, or one of these three, in its place. There was nothing to give these new compilations any peculiar sanctity or authority; or to secure them, any more than other collections of the same kind, from additions and changes. No reason can be assigned why any one of them, and still less why all three equally, should have obtained such celebrity and general reception, a character so exclusively sacred, as to cause all similar compilations to disappear. The proprietor of a different collection, if he chanced to meet with one of these, might note what he found in it, not contained in his own; and, if he thought the relation worthy of being preserved, he might insert it in the margin

of his old manuscript, or in the text of a new one. But there was no reason why he should reject what he had before regarded as a credible narrative, because he did not find it in one of these compilations. Because three unknown individuals had made three new compilations, not differing in their general character from such as had existed before, all other manuscripts of a similar kind would not be destroyed. Copies of various manuscripts would continue to be multiplied, containing, probably, new additions; till at the end of the second century, instead of finding Christians agreed in the use of the four Gospels, we should have found as many different gospels as there had chanced to be different collectors. Under the circumstances supposed, no authority, generally acknowledged, could have belonged to any particular compilation.

III. We will now attend to the third supposition mentioned, — that the correspondence between the first three Gospels, supposing them to have been written after the apostolic age, is to be accounted for by the circumstance, that they were all founded upon oral traditional narratives, in great part similar or the same. To this, the answer is, that an oral traditional history of Christ would have varied more in its form as preserved by three different writers. It would have become adulterated in different and opposite ways, probably grossly adulterated, through the various opinions, conceptions, errors, and passions of the times following the apostolic age. A large portion of the accounts concerning Christ would have been imperfectly comprehended by many, probably by most Christians; and, in repeating such accounts, they would have conformed them to their own apprehensions, and not to the truth. No narratives are so exposed to change and corruption by oral transmission, as those which relate to supernatural events, real or supposed. The forgeries of an excited imagination become more and more mingled

with the history, as it passes from mouth to mouth. Oral traditionary relations concerning the Founder of Christianity, preserved by Christians after the apostolic age, must have received a different moulding and coloring from many different hands. Had the first three Gospels been founded upon such relations, they would not have been so consistent with each other as they now are, in presenting the same view of the most remarkable character of Christ, of the events of his life, of his words and deeds, and of the purpose of his ministry. They would not have had the striking resemblance to each other which they now possess, in their general complexion. Nor would there have been the remarkable correspondence which now exists among them in many of their relations, in which we find the same facts, conceptions, and language.

In estimating the force of these remarks, we must attend particularly to the circumstance, that the traditionary accounts supposed could not have assumed a well-defined and authorized form, by being embodied into one long, oral narrative, generally taught and received. They must have existed in a fluctuating and unconnected state; for many things are related differently in the first three Gospels: each of them has matter, and two of them, respectively, much matter, which is not found in either of the others; and the arrangement of Mark and Luke differs from that of Matthew. Let us suppose that the history and discourses of Socrates had been preserved by oral tradition,—a tradition, however, not spread over the world, but confined to the city of Athens; and that, some half-century or more after his death, they had been first committed to writing by three different individuals. The improbability that their three works would have resembled each other as much as the first three Gospels, partially expresses the improbability, that these Gospels, being written after the apostolic age, were founded upon oral tradition.

The argument which it has been my object to illustrate may be stated briefly in the following manner. There are many correspondences between any two of the first three Gospels, so remarkable, that, in each particular case, they admit only of one of the following explanations: either one writer copied the other, or each writer followed some authority common to both, which authority must have been either written or oral. But either of these solutions, to which we are reduced by the nature of the case, becomes too improbable to be admitted, if we suppose those Gospels to have been written after the apostolic age.\*

It is, then, a curious and important circumstance, that in the very structure of the first three Gospels, when compared together, taken in connection with the fact of their common reception and high and peculiar authority among Christians before the close of the second century, we find evidence that they must have been composed during the apostolic age. Upon a contrary supposition, we have seen that no solution can be given of the remarkable phenomena presented by them, which is in itself probable, and at the same time consistent with the fact of their common reception. But, if written in the apostolic age, they must have been handed down from that period with such a character as gave them the authority which they afterwards possessed; and no reasonable doubt can remain of their genuineness. They were works which had received the sanction of that age; their authors were then, undoubtedly, known; and they were undoubtedly ascribed to their true authors.

We will now regard the four Gospels in common. Their general reception as genuine and sacred books, during the

\* On the manner in which the phenomena presented by the first three Gospels, when compared together, may be explained on the supposition of their genuineness, see Note B, pp. 510-544.



last quarter of the second century, can be accounted for only by admitting their genuineness.

Let us first view the subject in its simplest form. If the Gospels be not genuine, how was it possible for any one of them to obtain general reception and authority, as the work of the author to whom it was ascribed? This could not have taken place during the age of the apostles, while the reputed author or his friends were still living. After the death, therefore, of the reputed author, and of most of those acquainted with him, we must suppose that a claim was first set up for a certain book, falsely asserting it to be the work of St. Matthew or St. John, or one of the other evangelists. The claim had not before been heard of. The evidence which the case demanded to satisfy any reasonable man — that is, the belief and testimony of the preceding age — was wanting. It must have been evident, therefore, that the claim was without foundation. An attempted fraud of this kind in relation to books of such general interest, and pretending to such high authority, could not, from its very nature, have been successful. It could not have produced belief; and it would be an hypothesis against which it is unnecessary to bring arguments, to suppose it to have produced, throughout the widely dispersed Christian community, a general profession of belief in what every one must have known, or at least strongly suspected, to be a falsehood.

Possibly, however, the suggestion may still be made, that the reception of the Gospels, as the works of those to whom they are ascribed, was produced by a general concert and combination among Christians, under the direction of those of most eminence and authority. Enough has been already said to show, that the effect in question could not have been the result of such a combination. But let us again con-

sider, that the supposition implies great dishonesty in the deceivers, and gross ignorance and credulity in the deceived; and that no part of the Christian community will be exempt from one or the other of these charges. But none would venture explicitly to maintain, that the character of the early Christians was such as to render it probable that one portion of them was so fraudulent as to impose upon their brethren, for a rule of faith and practice, certain books, as genuine, which they knew were not genuine; and that the larger portion was so weak as to submit quietly to the imposition.

It is a strong subsidiary argument, if such be needed, against the supposition of a fraudulent or arbitrary assignment of the names of the authors of the Gospels, that only two of them are ascribed to apostles; and one of these two is ascribed to an apostle not distinguished, except as the author of the work in question. If the assignment had been arbitrary, names of more distinction would have been chosen. The early fathers, as is well known, were solicitous to prove, that the Gospels of Mark and Luke, though not written by apostles, were entitled to apostolical authority, on the ground that the former only embodied those narratives which St. Peter had delivered orally, and that the latter had received the sanction of St. Paul. Upon the supposition that these writings were as little the work of the supposed evangelists as of the apostles, the names of the latter would have been given them at once.

But there are other considerations to which we will now attend. It is to be particularly remarked, that we have not one only, but four books, each professing to give a history of Jesus Christ. These books, though consistent with each other in their representations of his most remarkable character; though they agree in giving the same view of his doc-

trines, and of the purpose of his ministry; and though they have many facts and discourses common to two or more of their number, — yet differ much from each other in the selection, arrangement, and connection of events, and in their accounts of some particular facts and transactions. Their discrepancies are such as could not escape observation. In the first half of the third century, the importance of them was magnified by Origen in the language of extravagant exaggeration. He adopted, and carried to its greatest length, the allegorical mode of interpreting the Scriptures; and thought that there was no means of saving the credit of the Gospels, but by recurring to the hidden sense of their words. In one place, after remarking upon an apparent disagreement between the first three evangelists and St. John, he says: “And in regard to many other passages, — if one carefully examine the Gospels, with a view to the dissonances in their history, which severally we shall endeavor to set forth according to our ability, he will, being wholly bewildered, either refuse to acknowledge, conformably to truth, the authority of the Gospels, and, making a selection, will adhere to one alone, not willing wholly to give up the faith concerning our Lord; or, receiving the four, will determine that the truth is not in their literal meaning.”\*

Now, if we admit that the Gospels were written by the authors to whom they are ascribed, the general reception of all four as of equal authority, notwithstanding these discrepancies, is at once accounted for. But, supposing them not to be genuine, no probable explanation can be given of this fact. Allowing that each of the four Gospels might, in some way or other, have obtained a certain degree of credit, yet one would have been used by one portion of Christians, and another by another, according as the place of its composition, or some other particular circumstance, favored its

reception. There would have been as many different parties among Christians as there were different Gospels ; each party maintaining the superior authority of its own Gospel. Beside these, there would probably have been another large party, which would not have admitted the authority, or at least the genuineness, of any one of our present Gospels. They who had received, and had been accustomed to use, a particular Gospel, would look with suspicion upon another, which was presented as its rival. However credulously they had admitted the claims of their own history, they would examine with jealousy those of a new work. This would especially be the case, if the latter appeared in any respects, though but of little importance, to be inconsistent with, or contradictory to, the former. But obvious discrepancies exist among the Gospels, the importance of which would be magnified by those who, having been accustomed to use and reverence one of these books, were urged to receive another as its companion, and to regard it as of equal credit. These discrepancies, apparent or real, must therefore have greatly aggravated the difficulty of introducing any other Gospel among those by whom one of the Gospels had been already received.

Let us, for instance, suppose the Gospel ascribed to Luke to have been presented for the first time to Christians who had been accustomed to use only that ascribed to Matthew. Upon first opening the former, they would have been shocked at finding a genealogy of Christ quite different from that with which they were familiar. They would next have missed, in its place, the Sermon on the Mount ; and, having found a portion of it elsewhere, they would have regarded it as inaccurately reported, when they perceived, that, with much verbal similarity, different thoughts were in fact expressed. They would have been offended by an arrangement of events, throughout the narrative, irreconcilable with that in their own Gospel. They would have discovered, that

even a different name, Levi, was given to the supposed author of that Gospel, in the account of his being called by Christ to be an apostle. Upon further examination, many other discrepancies, real or apparent, — that is, many other reasons for rejecting this new history, — would have presented themselves; and, so far from its being admitted to the same rank with that which they had before used, it would have been thrown aside with strong dislike. Beside the prejudice against it which would thus necessarily exist, we must recollect that all well-founded claims to genuineness and credit are excluded by the supposition we are considering. There is therefore no other account to be given of the common reception of these two Gospels, together with the remaining two, as all of equal authority, except this, that they had been handed down from the apostolic age as the works of the persons to whom they were ascribed, and had always been regarded as of equal authority.

To recur for a moment to the notion of a concerted plan to select our present Gospels, ascribe them to certain authors, and bring them into common use, it may be observed, that the more intelligent Christians before the end of the second century would not have concerted a plan to bring four Gospels into use, which the most able and learned of their immediate successors, Origen, thought exposed to such serious objections, when compared with each other.

With the argument just stated, a consideration is connected which deserves particular attention. It is, that, if the genuineness of any one of the four Gospels be proved, a very strong presumption immediately arises in favor of the genuineness of the remaining three. If the four Gospels were not handed down from the apostolic age, and received in common by succeeding Christians, then, at some period after that age, their respective claims to authority must have come in competition. But, if any one of them were genuine, the

authority of *this* had been acknowledged since the times of the apostles. Now, we cannot suppose that Christians, accustomed to use a gospel which they believed, or, rather, which, from the nature of the case, they knew to be genuine, would receive a spurious history of Christ as of equal authority. All their prejudices would have been in favor of the book to which they were accustomed. This, then, being genuine, and the other spurious, the evidence for the former being decisive, and the pretended evidence in favor of the latter false, there could be little probability that the new work would be classed with that already received, as a sacred book of the highest value. No probable motive, nor mistake, can be imagined, which might lead to so extraordinary a result.

This is taking the most obvious view of the subject. But when we further consider the discrepancies among the Gospels, and reflect that the new history must have appeared, in some respects, inconsistent with, and contradictory to, that genuine Gospel, the authority of which was already established, we perceive how incredible it is that the former would have been placed on a level with the latter. Without doubt, it would have been rejected. Common policy alone, if it were necessary to recur to such a consideration, would have prevented Christians from giving the same authority to a spurious as to a genuine book, if discrepancies existed between them; as these discrepancies would expose the whole history to the cavils and objections of unbelievers.

It appears, therefore, that, if any one of the Gospels be genuine, this circumstance alone goes far to prove that all are genuine. If the evidence for either of the Gospels had been much weaker than that for the other three, its discrepancies from them, if there had been no other cause, would have decided its rejection. The fact that we have four Gospels, which, with all their essential agreement, differ so much from each other, is a very important means of proving

the genuineness of all and of any one of them. That these discrepancies should serve to confirm our faith in all that is essential or important in the narrative contained in the Gospels, has been often observed. They show that the writers had each independent means of information. Such discrepancies naturally, and almost necessarily, exist among all original histories of the same events.

We will pass to another consideration, showing that the Gospels must have been transmitted as genuine from the apostolic age.

They are evidently the works of Jewish authors.\* But

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\* To this statement may be objected the opinion, which has obtained some currency, that Luke was a Gentile by birth. But this opinion is countenanced by only a very slight show of evidence.

The main argument for it is derived from the concluding verses of the Epistle to the Colossians, where St Paul, after sending salutations from some whom he designates as "of the circumcision" (chap iv. 11), afterwards sends salutations from others, whom it is supposed that he meant to distinguish from those first mentioned by him, as not being of the circumcision. Among them is Luke; and hence it has been inferred that Luke was by birth a Gentile.

But those who favor this opinion admit that he was a proselyte to the Jewish religion before becoming a Christian; and Lardner has shown, that there were not, as has been represented, two classes of proselytes among the Jews,—one circumcised, and the other uncircumcised. (Works, ed. 4to, 1815, vol iii. p. 395, seqq.; vol v p 496, seqq. Compare Wetstein's note, N. T., vol. i pp 483-485. See also Justin Martyr's *Dial cum Tryph.*, pp. 399-401, ed Thirlb., or p. 215, ed Maran.) All proselytes were circumcised. If Luke, therefore, had been a proselyte, it could not have been the purpose of the apostle to distinguish him as not being of the circumcision; and the argument therefore falls to the ground.

But the question whether Luke were a Jew or Gentile by birth is wholly unimportant, not merely in regard to the reasoning in the text, but in regard to the correct use of language in calling him "a Jewish writer." Proselytes, as we learn from Dion Cassius (quoted by Wetstein, *ubi sup*), were commonly called Jews; they being Jews by religion, and having become incorporated with the Jewish nation. St Luke (not, however, as I conceive, on the ground of his being a proselyte, but because he was a Jew by birth) ranks himself

the Gospels descend to us through the Gentile branch of Christians. Now, as has been already observed,\* the Jewish and Gentile Christians, from the first admission of the latter into the Church, had a strong tendency to separate, and form distinct societies. Hardly held together by the authority of the apostles, they seem to have started asunder as soon as the power of the apostles was removed. Very soon, the Gentile Christians far outnumbered the Jewish; and the two parties seem to have regarded each other with somewhat the same feelings as had belonged to Jews and Gentiles before the introduction of Christianity. Before the close of the second century, we find the Jewish Christians, with perhaps some individual exceptions, regarded as heretics, under the name of Ebionites. There is therefore a great improbability, that, at any period after the apostolic age, Gentile Christians would have received from Jewish Christians four spurious histories of Christ, purporting to have been written by apostles and companions of apostles, and would have deferred with such credulity to their testimony as to ascribe to these works the character of sacred books.

The improbability of this supposition is increased by the fact, that the four Greek Gospels — the works in question — were not in common use among Jewish Christians. They made use only of a Hebrew Gospel, which, there seems to be no reason to doubt, was, as they first received it, the Hebrew original of Matthew's Gospel; though this, in process of time, became corrupted in their hands. Their early reception of the Hebrew original may have countenanced the use of the Greek translation of Matthew; but, in regard to the other three Gospels, the Gentile Christians could not

with Jews in the commencement of his Gospel, speaking "of the events accomplished among us." Whatever question may have been raised respecting the parentage of Luke, there can be no doubt that the author of the Gospel ascribed to him was a Jew by birth or by adoption, — a Jewish writer.

\* See before, p. 51.



have received them upon the authority and recommendation of the Jewish Christians, by whom they were not used.

But there is another circumstance to be considered. The Gospels are evidently the work, not merely of Jewish authors, but of *unlearned* Jewish authors; men unskilled in the use of language generally, and of the Greek language in particular. These writings can make no pretension to any merely literary merit. Their Hebraistic style and idioms, with the peculiar senses given to words, must have obscured their meaning, and made them appear barbarous to those whose native language was the Greek. Origen informs us, that "the style of the Scriptures was regarded by the Greeks as poor and contemptible."\*—"Literary men," says Lactantius, "when they give their attention to the religion of God, unless they receive their fundamental instruction from some able teacher, do not become believers; for, being accustomed to pleasing and polished discourses and poems, they despise as sordid the simple and common language of the divine writings."† If, therefore, the Gospels had not been genuine, their style and idiom alone would have formed no small obstacle to their reception.

Let us now put these circumstances together, and, advert-  
ing merely to the particular view of the subject just taken, consider what is necessarily embraced in the supposition, that the Gospels, being spurious, obtained general authority after the apostolic age. According to this supposition, while the Jewish and Gentile Christians were regarding each other with but very little favor, four spurious works, the production of illiterate Jewish writers whose names are wholly unknown, the style of which must have been repulsive to Greeks, and three of which were not in common use among Jewish Christians, and therefore not recommended by their

\* Comment. in Joan, tom. iv § 2; Opp. iv. 93.

† Institut. vi. § 21.

authority, whatever weight that might have had, all, in a body, obtained the highest credit as sacred books throughout the widely dispersed community of Gentile Christians.

It is acknowledged, that the four Gospels were received with the greatest respect, as genuine and sacred books, by catholic Christians; that is, by the great body of Christians at the end of the second century. But, earlier than this time, it has been pretended that we find no trace of their existence; and hence it has been inferred, that, before this time, they were not in common use, and were but little known, even if extant in their present state.\* I shall hereafter produce notices of their existence at a much earlier period. But waiving, for the present, this consideration, the reasoning appears not a little extraordinary. About the end of the second century, the Gospels were revered as sacred books by a community dispersed over the world, composed of men of different nations and languages. There were, to say the least, sixty thousand copies of them in existence; † they were read in the churches of Christians; they were continually quoted, and appealed to, as of the highest authority; their reputation was as well established among believers, from one end of the Roman empire to the other, as it is at the present day among Christians in any country. But it is asserted, that, before that period, we find no trace of their existence; and it is therefore inferred, that they were not in common use, and but little known, even if extant in their present form. This reasoning is of the same kind as if one were to say that the first mention of Egyptian Thebes is in the poems of Homer. He, indeed, describes it as a city which poured a hundred armies from its hundred gates; but

\* See before, p. 7.

† See before, p. 32.

his is the first mention of it, and therefore we have no reason to suppose, that, before his time, it was a place of any considerable note. The general reception of the Gospels as books of the highest authority, at the end of the second century, necessarily implies their celebrity at a much earlier period, and the long-continued operation of causes sufficient to produce so remarkable a phenomenon.

This phenomenon, it may appear from what has been said, could not have been the result of any combination, nor of fraud, nor accident. Those by whom the Gospels were received as books of the highest value were men superior, generally, in moral and intellectual qualities, to their contemporaries. If they were deceived, it was at their peril; they enjoyed such means of knowledge concerning the history of the Gospels as might, and we may truly say must, have removed all doubt whether they were genuine or not; and, in their words and by their lives, they unequivocally affirmed them to be genuine. The first three Gospels, when compared together, present appearances which, viewed in connection with the fact of their general reception, admit of no explanation that does not suppose their genuineness. But further: from the nature of the case, the Gospels must have made their way to general reception by their intrinsic worth and authority. Four histories of Christ, the work of unlearned Jewish authors, written in a style which must have appeared barbarous to native Greeks, and regarded by those who held them in the highest respect as presenting discrepancies with each other, which, in the literal sense of their words, were irreconcilable, obtained equal reception throughout the Christian community, from beyond the Euphrates, through Asia Minor, Greece, Egypt, and Italy, to the western coasts of Spain and Africa. They were received as sacred books by portions of this community, who probably had never heard of each other's existence. Wherever the religion had spread, they had spread with it. The faith of

Christians rested on the belief of their authenticity. Of these facts, no other account can be given, than that those writings were derived from the same sources as the religion itself, and had been handed down with it from the apostolic age, as its authentic records. But, if this be so, no reasonable question can be raised respecting their genuineness. It could not be established by any proof more decisive and unsuspicious than what has just been stated; for it appears as a necessary inference from notorious and indisputable facts.

Such is the conclusion concerning the genuineness of the Gospels to be drawn from the fact of their reception as genuine throughout the community of catholic Christians in the last quarter of the second century. But all reasoning on historical subjects, however decisive it may seem, admits of confirmation; and we are not satisfied till whatever difficulties have been opposed to it are removed. We will therefore proceed to examine whether the conclusion to which we have arrived is confirmed or weakened by evidence from a still earlier period. We will first attend to the evidence of Justin Martyr. It has been maintained, as we have before seen,\* that he did not quote the Gospels; but consistently with the conclusion to which we have arrived, and in confirmation of it, I trust it may be clearly shown, that he did quote the same Gospels to which we now appeal, and that he, and the Christians contemporary with him, held them in as high respect as the Christians who immediately succeeded him, or as do Christians at the present day.

\* See before, p. 4.

## CHAPTER II.

### EVIDENCE TO BE DERIVED FROM THE WRITINGS OF JUSTIN MARTYR.

IN ascending toward the apostolic age, after the fathers who have been mentioned in the last chapter, we come to Justin Martyr, who flourished about the year 150. He was of Gentile extraction, born in Flavia Neapolis, a city of Samaria, in the latter part of the first or in the beginning of the second century. He studied the different systems of heathen philosophy under several masters. He preferred the Platonic, until he became acquainted with Christianity, which he then embraced as the only "certain and useful philosophy." He appears to have spent much of his life in travelling; and, according to Eusebius, chose Rome for his residence, where, as there seems no reason to doubt, he suffered martyrdom. As early as the year 150, he addressed a Defence of Christianity to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, in connection with Marcus Antoninus and Lucius Verus, and the Roman senate and people. Afterwards, he wrote another work in explanation and defence of Christianity, in the form of a dialogue with an unbelieving Jew, called Trypho. It is doubtful whether the form given to it be wholly fictitious, or whether the work were occasioned by a conference which actually took place. Not long before his death, he published a second Defence of Christianity. His two defences are commonly called Apologies, the name being used in the sense of the

Greek word from which it is derived; namely, "defence," "vindication."

Beside those that have been mentioned, Justin composed writings which are lost. There are three other short works extant, of which he was perhaps the author.\* But they are all addressed to Gentile unbelievers, and contain no reference to any book giving a history of Christ. This is true, likewise, of his second Apology, which is short. It was occasioned by a particular act of persecution at Rome, in which three Christians were put to death. Our attention, therefore, is confined to the first Apology, and the Dialogue with Trypho.

From these works of Justin might be extracted a brief account of the life and doctrines of Christ, corresponding with that contained in the Gospels, and corresponding to such a degree, both in matter and word, that almost every quotation and reference may be readily assigned to its proper place in one or other of the Gospels. There was consequently, till within a short period, no doubt entertained that the Gospels were quoted by Justin. The facts just mentioned do not fully establish this proposition; but they afford a strong presumption of its truth. To the supposition, however, that Justin quoted the Gospels, objections have been made, which, as far as they are important, may be reduced to the three following heads: —

I. He nowhere designates any one of the Gospels by the title of it afterwards in use, or names the evangelists as the authors whom he quotes. His quotations are taken from what he calls "Memoirs by the Apostles;" for so we may translate the title which he gives to the work or works to which he appeals.†

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\* Ad Græcos Oratio, Ad Græcos Cohortatio, De Monarchiâ.

† Τὰ Ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν Ἀποστόλων.

II. There is a great want of verbal coincidence between his quotations, and the corresponding passages in the Gospels.

III. He has passages apparently or professedly taken from the written history of Christ used by him, which are not found in the Gospels.\*

The facts stated in the first two objections admit of sufficient explanation, by attending to the character of Justin's writings, and the circumstances under which they were composed. His quotations are found, as has been said, in his first and longer Apology, and in his Dialogue with Trypho. In the former work, he gives an account of Christ and his ministry, of the doctrines and precepts of his religion, and of the character of his followers. He is, throughout, addressing heathens.

We will first, then, consider the manner in which he has described the Gospels (as we believe) in this Apology.† He quotes much from them without any express reference or description, which, however, he has given three times, in the following words:—

1. "And the messenger then sent to that virgin announced to her the glad news, saying, 'Behold, thou shalt conceive through the Holy Spirit, and bring forth a son, and he shall be the son of the Most High; and thou shalt call his name

\* These objections are stated in a dissertation by F. A. Stroth, published in the first volume of Eichhorn's *Repertorium*, and entitled, *Entdeckte Fragmente des Evangeliums nach den Hebräern in Justin dem Märtyrer*; i.e., *Fragments of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, discovered in Justin Martyr*.—Eichhorn's *Einleitung in d. N. T.*, i. 78–106 — Bishop Marsh's; *Letters to the anonymous Author of Remarks on Michaelis and his Commentator*, pp. 28–32; and his *Illustration of his Hypothesis respecting the Origin and Composition of our three first Gospels*, Appendix, pp. 22–79.

† The order of the Apologies in the older editions being inverted, the first written is often cited as the second; as it is by Eichhorn. This fact, if not explained, might produce some confusion. I call that the first Apology which was first written, and which is placed first in the later editions; and follow, in quoting, the pages of Thirlby's edition.

Jesus; for he shall deliver his people from their sins;’ *as those who have written memoirs concerning every thing relating to our Saviour, Jesus Christ, have taught, whom we believe.*”\*

2. In giving an account of the Last Supper of our Lord, he says, “*The apostles, in the Memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus informed us,*”† &c.

3. He says, “On the day which is called the day of the Sun [Sunday], we all, whether dwelling in cities or in the country, assemble together; when the Memoirs by the Apostles,‡ or the writings of the Prophets, are read, as long as time permits.” He then describes the rest of the service, which consisted in an exhortation, prayer, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and a contribution for the poor.

We believe that the books of which Justin thus speaks were the Gospels; and it does not appear how, in addressing a heathen emperor and heathen readers, he could have described them more clearly than he has done, or afforded more satisfactory proof that they were the works to which he appealed. How early the term rendered “Gospel” came to be applied to a history of Christ, is uncertain. We have no evidence that it was so long before the time of Justin. In this application, the word was so removed from its original sense, that the meaning put upon it would not have been understood, without explanation, by a native Greek, acquainted only with its common use in his language. If it was perceived to be the title of a book, it would still convey to him no proper and distinct notion of the contents of that book. This, therefore, was not a title to be used without explanation by Justin, in addressing a Roman emperor. Nor would there have been more propriety in his giving the names of the authors of the respective Gospels. Of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, neither the emperor, nor the generality of those heathens who might read his Apology, had probably



ever heard. The names of four unknown individuals would have carried with them no historical authority. Considering the state of things at the time when Justin wrote, there would have been something incongruous, and almost ludicrous, in quoting by name "The Gospel according to Matthew," or "The Gospel according to Luke," in an address to the Roman emperor and senate. The object of Justin, in appealing to any history of Christ was, to show, that his own statements rested on authority acknowledged by those in whose name he spoke. It was necessary, therefore, for him to describe those books in words which would be understood, and which would show, at the same time, how they were esteemed by Christians. This is what he has done. He calls them "Memoirs by the Apostles." The description was of the kind which his purpose required, and was sufficiently correct: for, though only two of the Gospels were written by apostles, the other two, according to the universal sentiment of antiquity, were considered as carrying with them apostolic authority; being sanctioned by apostles, and containing only narratives derived from them. We shall presently perceive, that, on another occasion, he expressed himself with perfect accuracy.

In his Dialogue with Trypho, Justin defends and maintains Christianity against the objections of the unbelieving Jews. Like his Apologies, therefore, this work was intended to be read by unbelievers, and by unbelievers who, as appears from a passage to be hereafter quoted, might never have heard the names of the evangelists. In speaking of the Gospels, Justin, accordingly, pursues the same course as in his Apology. But, in this Dialogue, we find the following passage: "In those *Memoirs*," says Justin, "*which I affirm to have been composed by apostles of Christ and their companions*, it is written, that sweat, like drops of blood, flowed from him while he was praying."

That companions of the apostles are here named by Justin serves especially to prove, that he referred to the Gospels, when viewed in connection with the fact, that the passage which he immediately quotes is found only in the Gospel of Luke, who was a companion of the apostles. In another place,\* a little after, Justin speaks of our Saviour's changing the name of Peter, "as it is written in his Memoirs;" and likewise of his giving to James and John the name of *Boanerges*.† By his Memoirs, according to Justin's constant use of language, we must understand Memoirs of which Peter may be regarded as the author.‡ But it was the opinion of the ancients, that Mark's Gospel was essentially the narrative of Peter, and thus entitled to apostolic authority. The mention of the surname given to James and John is to be found in no other Gospel.

The explanation which has been given of the fact, that Justin does not mention the evangelists by name, is confirmed by a passage before referred to,§ as proving that those for whom he intended his work might never have heard the names of the evangelists. He believed that the Apocalypse was written by St. John; and in defending the doctrine of a millennium, after quoting passages from the Old Testament, he appeals to that work in the following terms: "And a man of our own number, by name John, one of the apostles of Christ, in the revelation which was made by him, has prophesied that the believers in our Christ shall spend a

\* p. 385.

† Comp. Mark iii. 17

‡ As *Ἀποστόλων* elsewhere, when governed by *Ἀπομνημονεύματα*, denotes the authors, and not the subjects, of these Memoirs; so, in this passage, the genitive *αὐτοῦ* must refer to him who was regarded, in a certain sense, as the author of the work in question, namely, Peter, and not to the subject of the work, Christ. Justin nowhere uses the expression, *Ἀπομνημονεύματα Χριστοῦ*.

§ On the preceding page.

thousand years in Jerusalem ; and that after this will be, to speak briefly, the general and eternal resurrection and judgment of all men together."\* With the exception of St. Paul, there was probably no one of the early disciples whose name was more likely to be known to unbelievers than that of St. John ; yet we see in what manner he is here mentioned. It is easy to perceive how little advantage or propriety there would have been in Justin's quoting the evangelists by name, when addressing those to whom their names were unknown. Nor was there any cause why, with the purpose which he had in view, either in his *Apology* or his *Dialogue with Trypho*, he should be careful to distinguish between what he took from one evangelist, and what from another. He regarded all as of equal authority. There was therefore no reason why he should specify the different evangelists by name in quoting their Gospels. There was not even a suitable occasion for him to do so.

II. We come, then, to the second objection, — the want of verbal coincidence between the quotations of Justin and the corresponding passages in the Gospels.

In order to understand the precise force of this objection, it should be premised, that, in the quotations in question, the language answers in great part to that of the evangelists ; but that the cases are comparatively rare in which a series of words of any considerable length runs strictly parallel with the corresponding passage in the Gospels. There is commonly a change, addition, or omission of one or more words, or an alteration in the construction or arrangement.

Respecting the objection, as thus explained, it may first be remarked, that it proceeds on a false assumption concerning the degree of accuracy generally to be found in the quotations of the fathers, in cases where no particular circum-

stance operated to produce it. Strict verbal coincidence between their citations from Scripture, and the text of the New Testament or of the Septuagint, from which they quoted, is not to be confidently expected, except under conditions which do not apply to Justin's citations from the Gospels. The fathers may be presumed to have quoted verbally in their commentaries; because they may be supposed to have written with the volume, on which they were commenting, open before them. There is a presumption, likewise, that they were often accurate in their controversial writings; as it is obviously proper, when a doctrine is to be proved or disproved by the Scriptures, to produce the passages appealed to in the very words of the original. They sometimes give proof of quoting verbally by remarking on the various readings of a passage. One father, likewise, from habits of critical study of the Scriptures, is frequently correct, while another is more inaccurate. Origen, for example, quotes generally with closer adherence to the text, than Clement of Alexandria, of whom it has been remarked, that "he not unfrequently cites from memory, and gives rather the sense than the words of the sacred writers."\* But, in many of the works of the fathers, there is a want of verbal coincidence similar to that found in Justin's quotations from the Gospels. The other fathers, like Justin, quoted from memory carelessly, substituting one synonymous word or clause for another, transposing the order of words and thoughts, omitting parts of a passage, paraphrasing, inserting their own explanations, expressing the meaning in their own language, and blending together passages which stand remote from each other in the Scriptures.

Accuracy of quotation seems to have been less regarded by ancient writers, in general, than by modern; a circumstance probably arising from the greater difficulty in pro-

curing and in consulting books. It has been remarked, for instance, that Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in his rhetorical works, often quotes the same passage differently; and that, particularly, he has long citations from Isocrates repeated, sometimes more than once, with variations.\* We may mention, as another example, the well-known fact of the want of exactness in the quotations from the Old Testament, contained in the Gospels and Epistles. In ancient times, the unrolling of a volume to find a particular passage must have taken more time, and given more trouble, than the opening of a book in modern days.

But, besides the false assumption respecting the general accuracy of the fathers in their quotations, the objection we are considering rests for support upon an express assertion respecting Justin in particular. It has been said, that "Justin is extremely accurate as to the *words* of his quotations."† If Justin had been extremely accurate in his quotations from other books, there might be a reasonable doubt whether the "Memoirs by the Apostles" were the four Gospels, on account of the want of verbal agreement between his quotations and the text of the Gospels. But with the special exception to be hereafter mentioned, which does not affect the present argument, the assertion is strangely erroneous. Justin's frequent want of accuracy in his quotations has been remarked in strong language by the commentators on his writings.‡ There is a great want of verbal coincidence in many of his quotations from the Septuagint. He alters and transposes the language; he brings together detached passages from the same or from different books, giving them in connection, as if they followed each other in the original.

Vid. Matthæi Nov. Test. Græcè, tom. i. p. 690, n. 13.

† Marsh's Letters, p. 31, note. Comp. Appendix to Illustration, p. 82, seqq.

‡ See Thirlby's edition, pp. 75, 92, 166, 180.

It is not uncommon for him to commit the error of ascribing to one prophet the words of another; and he has even, apparently through indistinct recollection and the confounding of different things together, quoted the Pentateuch, once expressly and once by implication, for facts not to be found in it. I have noticed in his Apologies and Dialogue seven quotations from Plato. There is one of them, consisting only of four words in the original, which would be verbally accurate if Justin had not inserted a particle. None of the others is so. In three, he gives what he conceived to be the sense, without regard to the words, of Plato; and, in the only other of any considerable length, there is much discrepancy of language. He quotes likewise from Xenophon the story of the choice of Hercules, giving this also in his own words.

It is true, that many of Justin's quotations from the Septuagint, in the Dialogue with Trypho, correspond closely to the text of the original. But their difference in this respect from his other quotations in his first Apology and in the Dialogue is easily explained. Many of those referred to are of such length, as, at first view, to render it improbable that he trusted to his memory, as on other occasions. In citing a whole Psalm, or a long passage from one of the prophets, he is verbally correct, or nearly so, because, as it may be presumed, he recurred to the volume, and transcribed it. In his Dialogue with Trypho, he is reasoning in controversy with a Jew from passages of the Old Testament; and this circumstance would lead him to pay particular attention to accuracy in citing it. It is to be observed also, that, for his quotations from the Septuagint, he had an invariable archetype; while, on the contrary, the same facts or discourses were often recorded in different terms in each of the first three Gospels. This diversity would tend to prevent a distinct and accurate impression of any particular form of words from being left on the memory; and would, at the

same time, seem to prove it unimportant to adhere closely to the language of any one of the evangelists.

It seemed proper to enter into the preceding explanations, in order to show the sources of the erroneous reasoning respecting the quotations of Justin. But the fact, that he did not cite the work or works, which he entitles "Memoirs," with verbal accuracy, admits of decisive proof. In at least seventeen instances, he has repeated the same quotation. Now, if he had cited with verbal accuracy, every quotation, when repeated, must have agreed with itself. But this is not the fact. Passing over what may be considered as trifling variations, we find, that in more than half of them, as repeated, there is a striking want of correspondence, either in the words themselves, or in their connection with other words quoted. Nothing can be said which will tend either to illustrate or to set aside the inference from this fact. The conclusion, that Justin did not quote the "Memoirs" used by him with verbal accuracy, is irresistible; and it is truly an extraordinary phenomenon, that an hypothesis should have been built upon the opposite supposition.

It would have been strange, if Justin, in composing such works as he did, had regarded verbal accuracy in quoting the Gospels. He wrote for unbelieving Gentiles and Jews, — men ignorant of what Christianity really was. It was his purpose to give a general view of its history and character. In pursuing this purpose, while using the Gospels as his main authority, he intermixes with his statements quotations from them, sometimes partly in the words of the original, and partly in his own. He blends together passages taken from different places in the same Gospel, or from different evangelists. He quotes the Gospels from memory, as, with the exceptions before mentioned, he does the Septuagint. In thus quoting the Septuagint, he has committed remarkable

mistakes ; but he might well feel assured, that, in reporting the teachings or the history of our Lord, his memory would not so fail as to cause him to give a false representation of them. It would have been, not a degree of accuracy that we might reckon upon, but it would have been superstitious precision, if, in addressing a Roman emperor or unbelieving Jews, he had thought it necessary to transcribe the exact words of any one of the Gospels in the exact order in which they stand, — especially while he found the same facts and the same sayings presented by different evangelists in different words. In works of such a character as those of Justin, composed at so early a period in the history of Christianity, his mode of quotation was such as might reasonably be expected.

In not mentioning the Gospels by the titles in use among Christians, and in not appealing to the evangelists by name, Justin pursued a course similar to that which was adopted by a long series of Christian *Apologists* from his time to that of Constantine. In other words, it was the course pursued by the fathers generally in their works addressed to unbelievers, — by Justin's disciple, Tatian, who, though he formed a history of Christ out of the four Gospels, does not make mention of them, nor of the evangelists, in his Oration to the Gentiles ; by Athenagoras, who is equally silent about them in his Apology, addressed, in the last quarter of the second century, to Marcus Aurelius ; by Theophilus, who conforms to the common usage of the writers with whom he is to be classed, except that, as before mentioned,\* he once speaks of "the Gospels," and uses once the name "Gospel," and once the term "Evangelic Voice," in citing the Gospels, and once quotes the evangelist John by name ; by Tertullian, who quotes the Gospels elsewhere so abundantly, but



from whose Apology, or from whose work "To the Nations," no information (supposing those works to stand alone) could be gleaned concerning them; by Minutius Felix, whose single remaining book — a spirited and interesting defence of Christianity and attack on heathenism, in the form of a dialogue — affords, likewise, no evidence that the Gospels were in existence; by Cyprian, the well-known bishop of Carthage about the middle of the third century, who in his defence of Christianity, addressed to Demetrian, a heathen, does not name the Gospels nor the evangelists; and, to come down to the beginning of the fourth century, by Arnobius, who, in his long work "Against the Gentiles," does not cite any book of Scripture; and by Lactantius, who, in his "Divine Institutes," does not speak of the Gospels, nor quote by name any one of the evangelists, except John, and mentions him only in a single passage.

Cyprian, in his work addressed to Demetrian, has quotations from Scripture, and, among them, three from the Gospels, though the Gospels are not expressly named by him. On this, Lactantius remarks, that Cyprian has not treated the subject as he ought; for Demetrian "was not to be confuted by authorities from that Scripture which he regarded as false and fabricated, but by arguments and reason."†

Such, as we have seen, was the course generally adopted by the fathers, in their works addressed to unbelievers. But, among all who have been mentioned, Justin is remarkably distinguished by the abundance of his quotations from the Gospels, and by the explicitness with which he has described their character.

III. We proceed to the last objection. It is, that Justin has passages, apparently or professedly taken from the his-

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Institut., lib. iv. § 8.

† Ibid., lib. v. § 4

tory or histories of Christ used by him, which are not found in the Gospels.

In respect to these passages, it is first to be observed, that with only one exception,\* which presents no considerable difficulty, they are not professedly taken by Justin from the Memoirs used by him, or from any other book. That they are not found in the Gospels can therefore afford no proof that Justin did not elsewhere quote the Gospels. It must be remembered, that he lived near the times of the apostles; and that there would be nothing strange in his having learnt, by oral tradition, or from some writing or writings then extant, but since lost, a few facts respecting our Saviour, not recorded by the evangelists. From either source, accordingly, we may suppose him to have derived one or two circumstances which he mentions. In other passages, he has probably done nothing more than express, in different terms, his conception of the meaning of the evangelists; sometimes dilating it a little, and blending with it his own inferences. The following are the only passages of sufficient curiosity or importance to require particular remark.

1. Justin says, that the Jews who witnessed the miracles performed by Jesus "said that they were a magical delusion; and dared to call him a magician, and a deceiver of the people."†

Justin has here only stated, in different language, facts recorded by the evangelists, who relate that the enemies of Christ said, that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, and that he deceived the people. Lactantius expresses himself in the same manner as Justin. "He performed wonderful things," says that writer; "we might have thought him a magician,—as you now think him, and as the Jews then thought him,—if all the prophets, inspired by the same spirit, had not pre-

See No. 4, following.

† Dial. cum Tryph., p. 288.

dicted that the Messiah would perform those very things.”\* It was a common pretence of the enemies of Christianity, that our Lord performed his miracles by magic.

2. Justin says, that “Christ, being regarded as a worker in wood, did make, while among men, ploughs and yokes; thus setting before them symbols of righteousness, and teaching an active life.”†

It may be doubted, whether Justin was acquainted with any narrative to this effect. In the Gospel of Mark, the Nazarenes, according to the Common Version, are represented as asking concerning Jesus, “Is not this the carpenter?”‡ The word rendered “carpenter,” Justin, it appears, understood as denoting a worker in wood, which is not improbably its meaning in this passage. He may therefore have mentioned the particular implements which he does, because he regarded their fabrication as part of the proper business of a worker in wood.

3. Justin says, that “when Christ was born at Bethlehem, as Joseph could find no room in any inn in that village, he lodged in a certain cave, near the village; and, while they were there, Mary brought forth the Messiah, and laid him in a stall.”§

There was a prevailing tradition, that our Lord was born in a cave, which is found in many of the fathers besides Justin. At the present day, in the East, caves, it is said, are sometimes used for stables. Origen states, that, “conformably to the account in the Gospel-history of the birth of Christ, there is shown the cave in Bethlehem, in which he was born; and, in the cave, the stall where he was swathed: and the place which is shown is famous in that neighbor-

\* Institut., lib. v. § 3.

† Dial. cum Tryph., p. 333.

‡ Mark vi. 3

§ Dial. cum Tryph., p. 306. Comp. Luke ii. 7

hood, even among those who are aliens from the faith, on the ground that in this cave was born that Jesus whom Christians revere and venerate.”\* The alleged cave of the Nativity is still shown at Bethlehem.

4. Justin twice† gives the words, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, as those uttered at our Saviour's baptism; and, in one place, says expressly that the words were found in the Memoirs by the Apostles.

The words alleged by Justin are not in the Gospels; but they are given, as uttered at the baptism of our Saviour, by several other ancient writers, whose acquaintance with, and constant use of, the Gospels is well known. They are found in Clement of Alexandria, Methodius, Hilary, Lactantius, and Juvenius. Augustin states that these words were the reading of some manuscripts, though not, it was said, of the most ancient Greek copies, upon Luke iii. 22; and they are still found there in the Cambridge manuscript, and in several Latin manuscripts.‡

This, then, is nothing more than an error common to Justin, with many others. It seems to have had its origin in a confusion of memory; the words in question being applied to our Saviour repeatedly in the New Testament.§

5. The next passage, likewise, relates to the baptism of our Saviour. Justin says, “When Jesus came to the river Jordan, where John was baptizing, upon his entering the water, a fire was kindled in the Jordan; and the apostles of this same person, our Messiah, have written, that, when he came out of the water, the Holy Spirit, like a dove, alighted upon him.”||

Cont Cels., lib. i. § 51; Opp i. 367.

† Dial. cum Tryph., p 333 et p. 331.

‡ See Thirlby's note, p 333; and Griesbach's Nov. Test., Luke iii. 22.

§ Acts xiii. 33. Heb i. 5; v. 5.

|| Dial. cum Tryph., p 331.

Justin says, that, as Jesus entered the water, a fire was kindled in the Jordan. Of this story, beside the mention of it by him, traces are elsewhere extant.\* His mention of it is incidental. In what precedes the passage quoted, he is explaining at length what he supposes to be meant by "the Spirit of God resting upon Jesus." In relation to this subject, he quotes the account of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus at his baptism, and alleges for this fact the testimony of the apostles. But he does not bring into his argument the appearance of fire in the Jordan; nor, according to the grammatical construction of his words, does he say that this appearance was related by the apostles.

But it has been contended, that his whole account of the baptism of our Lord is so closely connected, that he must be understood as giving for the whole the authority of the apostles, and therefore that he quoted the whole from his *Memoirs* by the Apostles. This seems to be forcing a construction on his words, for the sake of creating a difficulty or an argument. But, should it be admitted that Justin is to be thus understood, we might conclude, either that the story of the fire in the Jordan had been interpolated in the copy of the Gospels which he used, as a similar story has been interpolated in two manuscripts, now extant, of old Latin versions;† or, what may seem more probable, that Justin, who often wrote carelessly, adduced the authority of the apostles for the whole of his account, while in fact it applied only to the essential part of it, and not to the circumstance which he had incidentally mentioned. As I have before observed, he twice refers to the Pentateuch for supposed facts not to be found in it.

6. The following is the only remaining passage: "Accord-

See Thirlby's note, p. 331; and Maran's note, p. 185 of his edition of Justin. Al-d Grabe's *Spicilegium*, i. 69

† See Griesbach's *N. T.*, Matt. iii. 15.

ingly," Justin remarks, "our Lord Jesus Christ said, 'In whatever actions I apprehend you, by those I will judge you.'"\*

These words are found, with some variety of form, in many ancient Christian writers; but Justin is the only one who appears to ascribe them to Christ.† His error, for I doubt not it is an error, may have arisen from a failure of memory similar to that through which he has elsewhere ascribed to one prophet the words of another; or, perhaps, he may have been acquainted with some tradition or writing which ascribed the saying in question to our Saviour.

There are a few sayings attributed to Jesus in the writings of the fathers, which are not recorded in the Gospels. Thus, for example, Irenæus quotes,‡ without distrust, from Papias a pretended discourse of our Lord relating to the millennium, resembling the extravagant fables of the Jewish rabbis found in the Talmud. He is represented as predicting, that there would be at that time an enormous increase in the size and productiveness of plants, particularly of the vine and of wheat, and as describing the clusters of grapes as about to be indued with a human voice. The story deserves particular attention, as serving to show what sort of materials might have gone to the composition of the Gospels, if their composition had been delayed till the times of Irenæus and Justin Martyr.

Origen speaks § of "the precept of Jesus," *Be good money-changers*; that is, learn to distinguish well between what is true and what is false, as skilful money-changers distinguish readily good money from bad. There is no intrinsic improbability that these words were uttered by Jesus. Origen often quotes or alludes to them. So also does Clement of Alexandria, who cites them as words of Scripture; || and they are

\* Dial cum Tryph., p. 232.

† Fabricii Cod. Apoc. N. T., tom. i. p. 333; ed. 2da.

‡ Cont. Hæres., lib. v. c. 23, §§ 3, 4, p. 333.

§ Comment in Joan., tom. xix. § 2; Opp. iv. 289, where see Huet's note.

|| Stromat., lib. i. § 28, p. 425. See Potter's note.

found in many other ancient writers, though the greater number do not expressly refer them to Christ.\*

Clement represents our Lord as saying, "Ask great things, and what are small shall be given you in addition."† Origen quotes these words without expressly ascribing them to Christ, but appearing to give them as his, and adds the following: "Ask heavenly things, and what are earthly shall be given you in addition;"‡ and, in another place, he states that Jesus said, "For the sake of the weak, I was weak; for the sake of the hungry, I hungered; and, for the sake of the thirsty, I thirsted."§

We know how familiarly acquainted Irenæus, Clement, and Origen were with the Gospels, and in what high respect they held them. The fact, therefore, that Justin quotes a supposed saying of our Lord not found in the Gospels, or that he mentions some unimportant incidents not recorded in them, affords no proof that he was not equally well acquainted with the Gospels, and did not hold them in like respect.

The examination of the passages from Justin, which we have gone over, is of much more interest than may appear at first sight. He carries us back to the age which followed that of the apostles. His writings have been searched for the purpose of finding some notices of Christ, or some intimations relating to him, different from the accounts of the evangelists. But nothing that can be regarded as of any importance has been discovered. On the contrary, he gives a great part of the history of Christ in perfect harmony with what is found in the Gospels, sometimes agreeing in words, and always in meaning. It is remarkable, that, in so early a writer as Justin, there is so little matter additional to what is

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Fabricii Cod. Apoc. N. T., tom. i pp. 330, 331.

† Stromat., lib. i. § 24, p. 416. Comp. lib. iv. § 6, p. 579.

‡ De Orat., § 2 et § 14; Opp. i. 197 et 219.

§ Comment in Matt., tom. xlii. § 2; Opp. iii. 573.

contained in the Gospels; so little which one can suppose to be derived from any other source. That we find what we do, presents no marvel nor difficulty. The phenomenon to be accounted for is, that we find no more; and of this phenomenon the only satisfactory explanation is, that the Gospels had come down from the apostolic age with such a weight of authority, there was such an entire reliance on their credibility, that it was generally felt to be unwise and unsafe to blend any uncertain accounts with the history contained in them. Such accounts, therefore, were neglected and forgotten. The Gospels extinguished all feebler lights.

In what precedes, we have examined the objections to the conclusion that Justin quoted the Gospels. We will now attend to the arguments in proof of this fact.

I. In other cases, where we find such an agreement of thoughts and words as exists between the passages quoted by Justin and passages of the Gospels, particularly of Matthew and Luke, no doubt is entertained that the volume thus furnishing a counterpart to certain citations was the work cited.\* The presumption arising from this agreement is to be overborne only by the strongest objections, founded on some striking peculiarity in the case. Nothing, however, has been opposed to it but the conjecture, that there may have been some work extant in the time of Justin, as nearly allied in character to the first three Gospels as any one of these is to either of the others; and that Justin quoted this work, and not the Gospels.

But, in regard to any book which Justin may be conjectured

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\* The coincidence is particularly striking in several citations from the Old Testament, common to St Matthew and Justin, in which the latter writer appears to have followed, wholly or in part, the Greek Gospel of the former; though the passages, as they stand in that Gospel, agree neither with the Septuagint nor the Hebrew.



to have quoted, it must answer to the following conditions: It must have been one which he and other Christians believed, or professed to believe, "written by apostles and companions of apostles;" it must have been of the highest authority among Christians, — a sacred book, read in their churches; it must have been the work to be appealed to as containing those facts, doctrines, and precepts on which they formed their lives; and it must, immediately after he wrote, have fallen into entire neglect and oblivion; for no mention of it, or allusion to it, as quoted by him, is discoverable in any writer who succeeded him. But it is impossible to believe all these propositions to be true of any book.

The supposition of some one book, different from the Gospels, has been resorted to by those who have maintained that Justin did not quote the Gospels; though they have not agreed among themselves in their conjectures as to what this book might be. But this supposition is irreconcilable with the language of Justin, which implies that he quoted a number of books, as I shall remark more particularly hereafter. Should it, in consequence, be maintained that he used a number of books different from the Gospels, the objections just urged would apply with even greater force, if possible, to this supposition than to that of a single book. No plausible hypothesis, therefore, can be framed to detract from the evidence afforded by the correspondence of Justin's quotations with the contents of the Gospels.

These quotations principally correspond to passages in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. But if Justin, and the Christians contemporary with him, received those Gospels as works of the highest authority, we may confidently infer that they received the other two Gospels as bearing the same character. Had they not done so, it is impossible that the Gospels of Mark and John should have been so regarded by their younger contemporaries, the Christians of the time of Irenæus. We have before attended to the considerations which show, that

such an event could not have occurred; that if the authority of two, or of one, of the Gospels were established in the Christian community, this would present a decisive obstacle to the reception of any other, which had not always been regarded as having like authority.\*

In respect to the use made by Justin of the Gospels of Mark and John, it may be observed, that Mark records but few discourses of our Saviour, and has very little which is not common to him with Matthew or Luke, except some additional circumstances in the relation of particular facts, not of a character to be noticed in giving a general view of the history and doctrines of Christianity. His language, likewise, when different, being commonly inferior to that of Matthew and Luke, Justin would naturally prefer their expressions. But, as we have seen,† he has mentioned two facts recorded only by Mark, and that with an almost explicit reference to his particular Gospel.

From John's Gospel, Justin derived his doctrine of the incarnation of the Logos in Christ, — a doctrine which must have been founded on the first verses of that Gospel. The conception of the Logos, indeed, was familiar before the time when either Justin or St. John wrote; but the doctrine of the incarnation of the Logos in Christ must have rested wholly on the passage referred to. Accordingly, Justin speaks in language similar to that of St. John, of "the Logos having been made flesh."‡ He has likewise other conceptions and turns of expression apparently derived from John's Gospel. He represents John the Baptist as having said, "I am not the Christ."§ He justifies Christians for not keeping the Jewish sabbath, "because God has carried on the same administration of the universe during that day as during all

\* See before, pp. 102–107.

† See before, p. 118.

‡ Apolog. Prim., p. 52. John i. 14.

§ Dial. cum Tryph., p. 332. John i. 20; iii. 28.

others;”\* a thought so remarkable, that there can be little doubt, that he borrowed it from what was said by our Saviour, when the Jews were enraged at his having performed a miracle on the sabbath: “My Father has been working hitherto, as I am working.”† And, in the last place, he states, that “Christ said, ‘Unless ye be born again, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven;’” adding, with allusion to the words of Nicodemus, that “it is evidently impossible for those once born to enter into their mother’s womb.”‡

II. That Justin made use of the Gospels, appears from the fact that there is no intimation to the contrary in the whole numerous succession of subsequent Christian fathers. We have the evidence of Eusebius in the fourth century, and of Photius in the ninth, that his works were well known, and held in high esteem. They are referred to with respect by several of the principal fathers. But his quotations excited no attention, as presenting any unexpected appearance, or as a matter of any difficulty or curiosity. If he had quoted histories of Christ different from the Gospels, it is incredible that the fact should have escaped the knowledge of all ancient writers after his time; or that, being known, it should not have been adverted to.

III. The description given by Justin of the books which he used shows that those books were the Gospels. He appeals to several books. He speaks, not of one, but of several authors. “Those,” he says, “who have written memoirs concerning every thing relating to our Saviour Jesus Christ, whom we believe;”—“Memoirs, which I affirm to be composed by the apostles of Christ, and their companions;”—“Memoirs composed by the apostles, which are

\* Dial. cum Tryph., pp. 194, 195.

† John v. 17.

‡ Apolog. Prim., p. 89. John iii. 8, 4.

called Gospels.”\* These passages, taken in connection, appear, without any other evidence, to be decisive of the point in question. It is hardly to be contended, that books extant in the time of Justin, which were called Gospels, and which were written, or were supposed to be written, by apostles of Christ and their companions, could be any other than our present Gospels.†

IV. The manner in which Justin speaks of the character and authority of the books to which he appeals, of their reception among Christians, and of the use which was made of them, proves these books to have been the Gospels. They carried with them the authority of the apostles. They were those writings from which he and other Christians derived their knowledge of the history and doctrines of Christ. They were relied upon by him as primary and decisive evidence in his explanations of the character of Christianity. They were regarded as sacred books. They were read in the assemblies of Christians on the Lord's day,

\* See before, pp. 204, 207.

† It deserves remark, that Justin, besides saying that the books he used were called Gospels, twice speaks of “the Gospel” in the singular, using the article.

He represents Trypho as saying (p. 156), “I know also that your precepts in what is called the Gospel are so wonderful and weighty, as to cause a suspicion that no one may be able to observe them; for I have taken the pains to read them.”

In the other passage referred to, he quotes (p. 352) Matt. xi. 27, as being “written in the Gospel.”

In both passages, the force of the article in Greek is the same as in English. By “the Gospel” must be meant some particular, well-known book. But it is not to be imagined, that, in the time of Justin, any history of Christ, not one of the four Gospels, was thus pre-eminently distinguished above them by the title of “the Gospel,” or that any one of the four Gospels was so distinguished from the other three. No conclusion remains, but that Justin used the term “the Gospel” in a sense familiar to the fathers who succeeded him, as denoting the four Gospels collectively, and consequently the volume in which they were brought together.

in connection with the prophets of the Old Testament. Let us now consider the manner in which the Gospels were regarded by the contemporaries of Justin. Irenæus was in the vigor of life before Justin's death; and the same was true of very many thousands of Christians living when Irenæus wrote. But he tells us, that the four Gospels are the four pillars of the Church, the foundation of Christian faith, written by those who had first orally preached the Gospel, by two apostles and two companions of apostles.\* It is incredible that Irenæus and Justin should have spoken of different books. We cannot suppose, that writings, such as the Memoirs of which Justin speaks, believed to be the works of apostles and companions of the apostles, read in Christian churches, and received as sacred books of the highest authority, should, immediately after he wrote, have fallen into neglect and oblivion, and been superseded by another set of books. The strong sentiment of their value could not so silently, and so unaccountably, have changed into entire disregard, and have been transferred to other writings. The copies of them spread over the world could not so suddenly and so mysteriously have disappeared, that no subsequent trace of their existence should be clearly discoverable. When, therefore, we find Irenæus, the contemporary of Justin, ascribing to the four Gospels the same character, the same authority, and the same authors, as are ascribed by Justin to the Memoirs quoted by him, which were called Gospels, there can be no reasonable doubt that the Memoirs of Justin were the Gospels of Irenæus.

We shall next consider a portion of the evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels, to be gathered from a still earlier period.

\* See before, p. 72, seqq.

## CHAPTER III.

### EVIDENCE OF PAPIAS.—ST. LUKE'S OWN TESTIMONY TO THE GENUINENESS OF HIS GOSPEL.

BETWEEN the death of St. John and the time when Justin wrote, — an interval, probably, of about fifty years, — there were very few Christian writers of whose works any remains are extant. It was a period of distress and confusion. Our religion, left upon the death of that apostle without any powerful and distinguished advocate, was struggling for establishment against the opposition and persecution of the world. A great revolution was taking place in the minds of those who had been acted upon by the preaching of the apostles. Their opinions, like their circumstances, were unsettled. The separation or the union, which was afterwards effected, between ancient errors and the new doctrines of our faith, was as yet undecided. Our religion had not assumed among its professed followers a well-defined character; and its sublime truths were not so fully comprehended as when men had become more familiar with the conception of them. It had not yet secured possession of the minds and hearts of many converts well qualified by their literary eminence to explain and defend it. These causes will account for the few remains of writers from among the catholic Christians during this period; and for the absence of any historical notice of the Gospels, which has come down to our times, except that of Papias.

Papias I have already had occasion to mention. He lived, it may be recollected, during the first quarter of the second century; and was acquainted, as he informs us, with many of the disciples of the apostles. He wrote a work, now lost, but of which some fragments are preserved by Eusebius. In this work, as quoted by Eusebius, Papias mentions the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. He says that he received much information from John the Presbyter; and gives the following account, as derived from him:—

“The Presbyter said, that Mark, being the interpreter of Peter, carefully wrote down all that he retained in memory of the actions or discourses of Christ; not, however, in order, for he was not himself a hearer or follower of the Lord; but afterwards was, as I said, a companion of Peter, who taught in the manner best suited to the instruction of his hearers, without making a connected narrative of his discourses concerning the Lord. Such being the case, Mark committed no errors in thus writing some things from memory; for he made it his sole object not to omit any thing which he had heard, and not to state any thing falsely.” †

Of Matthew, Papias says, “Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able.” ‡

It appears from these passages, that the Gospels of Matthew and Mark were well known before the time of Papias, that they were attributed to those writers, and, being regarded as authentic, were venerated as oracles.

In the commencement of the Acts of the Apostles, we have Luke’s own testimony to the genuineness of his Gospel. The historical proof that the first-mentioned work was written by him is confirmed by other evidence, so satisfactory as

See before, pp. 36, 37. † Euseb. Hist. Eccles., lib. iii. c. 39.

‡ Euseb. Hist. Eccles., lib. iii. c. 39.

to leave no reasonable doubt on the subject.\* We have, then, Luke's own testimony that he was the author of a history of Christ. But as no one will adopt so absurd a supposition as that the history which he wrote has been lost, and another substituted in its place, the work of which he speaks must be our present Gospel.

But Luke's testimony not only establishes the genuineness of his Gospel: it has a further bearing. There is a striking resemblance between his Gospel and those of Matthew and Mark. There are, likewise, many striking points of resemblance between the character and situation of the former writer and the two latter. They had similar opportunities for information respecting all the common objects of knowledge; the influences of our faith had produced in them similar feelings and conceptions; they were all placed in circumstances the most extraordinary, and peculiar to a few individuals; they all belonged to the small class of the first missionaries of our religion. One of them is supposed to have been an eye-witness of many of the facts, and a hearer of many of the discourses, which he records; and the other two are believed to have derived their information from those who, like him, were companions of our Lord. When, therefore, we find that a work of a very remarkable character was written by Luke, and that two other works distinguished by the same characteristics are ascribed to Matthew and Mark, there arises a strong presumption that they have been ascribed to their true authors. No objection can be brought against the genuineness of the two latter histories, stronger than those which may be adduced against the genuineness of the former. In one case, we find that these objections are unfounded: we have therefore good reason to believe that they are equally unfounded in the other.

\* See before, pp. 89-91.



Here, likewise, we would recur to the considerations before presented,\* which show that the proof of the genuineness of any one of the Gospels involves the proof of the genuineness of all. The argument that has been brought forward, when reduced to its simplest form, is nothing more than an obvious truth, which may be thus stated: Supposing any body of men to possess an account of events esteemed by them of the greatest interest to themselves and to the world, to know that this account was the work of an author whom they hold in the highest respect, to believe him to have had the most satisfactory means of information, and to regard his work, *therefore*, as entitled to the fullest credit, and, still more, to a sacred character; and supposing them, further, to be placed in circumstances, which alone, even without any careful scrutiny on their part, almost exclude the possibility of deception, — these men will not receive, as likewise entitled to the fullest credit and to a sacred character, another account, a fraudulent work, falsely ascribed to some venerated name, falsely pretending to an authority to which it has no claim, and, at the same time, in more or fewer respects, irreconcilable with that which has been received as the truth.

The Gospel of Luke, then, came down from the apostolic age as his work, with his own attestation to its genuineness. This being so, the other three Gospels could not have obtained reception as sacred books, in common with it, if they had not been the works of the authors to whom they were ascribed.

Confining our view merely to the evidence presented in this chapter, we may regard the result of it under still another aspect. Luke testifies to the genuineness of his own Gospel; Papias, to that of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark: it follows that the authority of all three was estab-

\* See before, pp. 102-107.

lished in the time of Papias. Now, this was a period but just after the death of St. John, when thousands were living who had seen that last survivor of the apostles, many perhaps who had made a pilgrimage to Ephesus to behold his countenance and listen to his voice, and hundreds who belonged to the church over which he had presided in person. It is incredible, therefore, that, before the time of Papias, a spurious gospel should have been received as his work; and after the time of Papias, when the authority of the first three Gospels was established, the attempt to introduce a gospel falsely ascribed to St. John must have been, if possible, still more impracticable.

Here, then, we finish the statement of the direct historical evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels, from their reception by the great body of Christians.\* We will hereafter consider what may be inferred from the use made of them by the earlier heretical sects.

\* It has been customary, in treating the subject before us, to allege the supposed testimony of certain writings ascribed to contemporaries of the apostles, and called Writings of Apostolical Fathers. But nothing has, in my opinion, contributed more to give a false and unfavorable impression of the real nature and strength of the evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels. On this subject, see Note C, pp. 545-569.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF THE GENUINENESS OF THE GOSPELS.

SUCH, as we have seen, is the direct historical evidence of the genuineness of the Gospels. The confirmation it receives from the manner in which they were regarded by the earlier heretical sects is still to be considered; and likewise all that proof to be derived from the Gospels themselves, which makes it evident, that they could have been written only by individuals bearing the character, and placed in the circumstances, of those to whom they are ascribed. For the present, we confine our attention to the direct historical evidence alone.

In regard to this, the nature of the case is such, that no evidence of the same character, or of the same weight, can be produced for the genuineness of any other ancient work, which was not, like them, received as an undisputed book of the Christian Scriptures. It is the testimony of a great, widely spread, and intelligent community to a fact about which they had full means of information, and in which they had the deepest interest. It is their testimony to the genuineness of books, the reception of which as authentic would change the whole complexion of their lives; and might, not improbably, put at hazard life itself, or all that they had before considered as rendering life desirable. It is the testi-

mony of Gentiles to their belief of the genuineness and truth of books derived from Jews,—books regarded with strong dislike by a great majority of that nation; three of which were not in common use among those few Jews who, like them, were disciples of Christ; and all of which were so stamped throughout with a Jewish character, as to be likely, at first view, strongly to offend their prejudices and tastes.

But the peculiar nature and value of this testimony may be laid out of consideration. The fact alone, that the four Gospels were all received as genuine books, entitled to the highest credit, by the whole community of catholic Christians dispersed throughout the world, admits of no explanation, except that they had always been so regarded. We have begun by reasoning from their reception during the last quarter of the second century; and their reception at that time affords, as we have seen, decisive proof of the estimation in which they must have been held during the whole preceding interval from their first appearance. But, though we may entitle this proof decisive, yet, like all other probable reasoning, it admits of confirmation; and we have seen the confirmation afforded by the evidence of Justin Martyr, who gives direct proof, that the authority of the Gospels was established among Christians before the middle of the second century. I say, before the middle of the second century; for, though this was the precise time when he wrote his first Apology, yet his testimony must be considered as relating to a state of things with which he had been previously conversant. We have next remarked the express and particular testimony of Papias to the genuineness of two of the Gospels, and to the estimation in which they were held by Christians. Then, tracing the stream of evidence back to its very source, we have seen Luke's own attestation to the genuineness of his Gospel. And in connection with this, and with the testimony of Papias, we have attended to the fact, that the

acknowledged genuineness of any one of the Gospels must have presented an insuperable barrier to the reception of any spurious gospel as a work of like authority. The testimony to the genuineness of any one of the Gospels is virtually a testimony to the genuineness of all; and the testimony to their genuineness is a testimony to their reception by all catholic Christians wherever they had become known.

But, in regard to our present argument, it is unimportant what period an objector may fix upon for the general reception of the Gospels as genuine. The later the period assigned for this event, the more obviously incredible does it become that it should have taken place, on the supposition that the Gospels were not received from the beginning in the character which they afterwards bore. The longer the Christian community had existed without a knowledge of the Gospels, or without a belief in their genuineness, the more difficult must it have been to produce this belief, and to cause them to be recognized as books of the highest value and authority. Let us suppose that they were not so regarded till the last quarter of the second century. Their general recognition at that period becomes a most remarkable phenomenon. Some very effective cause or causes must be assigned for it, sufficient to explain how four spurious books, not before known, or known only to be rejected, should suddenly have obtained universal acceptance throughout the Christian world, as containing the truths fundamental to a Christian's belief. No trace of any causes capable of producing this result can be discovered or imagined. In the nature of things, it is impossible that such causes should have existed. The Christians of that age professed to receive the Gospels as genuine and authentic, on the ground that they had always been so regarded. The truth of this fact is the only explanation which can be given of the universal respect in which they were then held.

It appears, therefore, that the evidence of the genuineness of the Gospels is of a very different character from what we are able to produce for the genuineness of any ancient classical work. Very few readers, I presume, could at once recollect and state the grounds on which we believe the Epistles to Atticus to have been written by Cicero, or the History of the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides. But should any writer undertake to impugn the genuineness of these, or of many other ancient works that might be named, in the manner in which attempts have been made to weaken the historical argument for the genuineness of the Gospels, he would hardly succeed even in gaining a discreditable notoriety.

But there are objections derived from the Gospels themselves, which are relied upon as doing away the whole force of the historical argument. It is urged, that the contents of one Gospel are irreconcilable with those of another, and therefore that the Gospels could not be the works of well-informed narrators. By the opponents of Christianity, the errors of theologians are commonly confounded with the truths of our religion; and, so far as the objection just mentioned rests on any tenable grounds, it bears, not against the authenticity and genuineness of the Gospels, but against the doctrine that they were written by miraculous inspiration. It would be an extraordinary fact, if these books presented on their face decisive objections to their own credibility, which had been overlooked for eighteen centuries by intelligent Christians engaged in their study. To any one, indeed, who is capable of a just apprehension of the proof of the genuineness of the Gospels, afforded by their intrinsic character, nothing can appear more idle than such an attempt to prove, from their contents, that they could not have been written by the authors to whom they are ascribed.

But there is another objection drawn from the essential

character of the Gospels, which is, in fact, the root, and furnishes the sap and strength, of all others which have been urged against them. They contain the history of a miraculous dispensation ; and a miracle, it is asserted, is impossible.

This objection, if it can be maintained, is final, not merely in regard to the truth of the Gospels, and the truth of Christianity, but in regard to the truth of all religion.

The assertion, that a miracle is impossible, and, consequently, that such a miraculous intervention of the Deity as Christianity supposes is impossible, must rest for support solely on the doctrine, that there is no God, but that the universe has been formed and is controlled by physical powers essential to its elementary principles, which, always remaining the same, must always produce their effects uniformly, according to their necessary laws of action. This being so, a miracle, which would be a change in these necessary laws, is of course impossible.

But when we refer the powers operating throughout the universe to one Being, as the source of all power, and ascribe to this Being intelligence, design, and benevolence, — that is, when we recognize the truth that there is a God, — it becomes the extravagance of presumptuous folly to pretend, that we may be assured, that this Being can or will act in no other way than according to what we call the laws of nature ; that he has no ability, or can have no purpose, to manifest himself to his creatures by any display of his power and goodness which they have not before witnessed, or do not ordinarily witness.

The assertion, therefore, that a miracle is impossible, can be maintained by no coherent reasoning, which does not assume, for its basis, that all religion is false ; that its fundamental doctrine, that there is a God, is untrue. The controversy respecting it is not between Christianity and atheism : it is between religion, in any form in which it may appear, and atheism.

One may, indeed, give the name of God to the physical powers operating throughout the universe, considered collectively, or to some abstraction, — as the moral law of the universe, for example, — or to some conception still more unsubstantial and unintelligible, and thus contend that he does not deny the existence of God. But there is only one view which an honest man can take of the deception which in this and other similar cases has been attempted through a gross abuse of words, by which their true meaning is razed out, and a false meaning forced upon them. In contending with irreligion, we have a right to demand that we shall not be mocked with the language of religion.

But the fact has been overlooked, that, supposing the proposition to be admitted, that a miraculous intervention of the Deity is impossible, it would have no bearing on our immediate subject. No inference could be drawn from it to show, that the Gospels were not written by those to whom they are ascribed.

The first disciples of our Lord, the first preachers of his religion, whether their account was true or false, taught that he was a messenger from God, whose authority was continually attested by displays of divine power, superseding the common laws of nature. They represented Christianity only under the character of a dispensation wholly miraculous. It has come down to us bearing this character from the first accounts we have of its annunciation, — from the time when St. Paul wrote those Epistles, the genuineness of which cannot be questioned. The fact that Christianity is a miraculous dispensation was the basis of his whole teaching, and equally of the teaching of the other apostles. It cannot be pretended, that any indication is to be found of its having been presented to men under another character. The effects which followed its preaching are such as could have resulted only from such a conception of it. The hypothesis, therefore, — for such an



hypothesis has actually been put forward,\*—that this was not the original character of Christianity; that its first preachers did not announce it as a miraculous dispensation, but that some time during the lives of the apostles, or immediately after, it assumed this character,—can be regarded only as one of the most extraordinary of those exhibitions of human folly which have lately been given to the world as speculations concerning our religion. There is no doubt, that the apostles and their companions represented Christ as a messenger from God, whose divine authority was attested throughout his ministry by miracles. It can therefore be no objection to the genuineness of the Gospels, that such is the representation to be found in them. Whether true or false, it is the only representation that was to be expected in histories of Jesus given by apostles and their companions.

The Gospels, then, contain that view of Christianity which was presented by its first preachers. We have in these books that solemn attestation which was borne by them, and was confirmed by circumstances that exclude all doubt of its truth, to facts in the ministry and character of Christ which evince his divine mission.

In regard to men's belief in Christianity, and their apprehension of its character, the present is an age of transition. We are leaving behind us the errors and superstitions of former days, with all their deplorable consequences,—the domination of a priesthood, tyranny over reason, persecution, false conceptions of morality by which its sanctions were often wholly perverted, and that disgust toward Christianity which the deformed image bearing its name, and set up for idol-worship, was so fitted to produce. But through a revolution of feeling, occasioned by this state of things, many of the

\* By Strauss, in his *Leben Jesu* (Life of Jesus)

clergy, particularly in England,—one is reluctant to say many priests, though this is a title which they readily assume,—have turned about, and are travelling back into the dark region of implicit faith, Jesuitical morality, and religious formalities, absurdities, and crimes. On the other hand, there is a multitude of speculatists, who, in the abandonment of religious error, have abandoned religion itself, and whose only substitute for it, if they have any, is an unsubstantial spectro which they have decorated with its titles. Meanwhile, very many enlightened men, who have been repelled from the study of Christianity by the imbecility or folly of those who have assumed to be its privileged expositors and defenders, regard it, at best, only with a certain degree of respect, as being, perhaps, a noble system, if properly understood, and one the belief of which, even under the forms that it has been made to assume, is, at all events, useful to the community. *Magnifica quidem res et salutaris, si modo est ulla.*

In order that we may pass from this state of things to a better, it is necessary that the intellect of men should be awakened, and brought to exercise itself on the most important subject that can be presented to its examination. The result would be a rational and firm faith in Christianity, with all the consequences that must flow from such a faith. The convictions which rest on reason are of very different efficacy from the impressions produced through prejudice, imagination, or passion. The latter may lead to great evil: the former can produce only good. There is a sense of reality attending the convictions of reason, which makes it impossible that they should not penetrate into the character. Let any one, in the best exercise of his understanding, be persuaded that the history of Jesus Christ is true; that the miracle of his mission from God, which belongs to the order of events lying beyond the sphere of this world, and concerning the whole of man's existence, is as real as those facts which take place in this world, conformably to the narrow circle of its laws with which

we are familiar, — and he has become intellectually, and can hardly fail to become morally, a new being. In recognizing that fact, he recognizes his relation to God, or rather, if I may so speak, God's relation to him. Life assumes another character. It is not a short period of existence in which we are to confine our views and desires to what may be attained within its limits. It is a state of preparation for a life to come, which will continue into an infinity where the eye of the mind is wholly incapable of following its course. Viewed in the broad light which thus pours in upon us, their false coloring disappears from the objects of passion; and we perceive that there is nothing permanently good, but what tends to the moral and intellectual progress of the soul, and nothing to be dreaded as essentially evil, but what tends to impede it.



# PART III.

ON THE EVIDENCE FOR THE GENUINENESS OF THE GOSPELS  
AFFORDED BY THE EARLY HERETICS.



## PART III.

### CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS. — THE EBIONITES. — THEIR USE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW ONLY. — INFERENCES FROM THEIR NOT USING THE OTHER THREE GOSPELS.

WE now come to a subject, concerning which important errors have been committed, and which requires a more thorough examination than it has hitherto received. It is the manner in which the Gospels were regarded by the heretics of the first two centuries, particularly by the Gnostics.

Beside the great body of Christians, the *Catholic* Christians, as they may be denominated, conformably to the ancient use of the term, who were united, notwithstanding many diversities of opinion, in the general reception of a common system of faith, there were, at an early period, various sects called *Heresies*. The generality of the Heretics of the first two centuries may be divided into two principal classes, — the Ebionites and the Gnostics; and these two classes alone are of importance as furnishing evidence in regard to the genuineness of the Gospels.

Of the EBIONITES, the heretical Jewish Christians, I shall state in sect. ii. of Note A,<sup>1</sup> nearly all that may be said con-

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cerning them in relation to the present subject. They were a sect that attracted but little notice from the earlier fathers; whose accounts of them, however, are explicit and consistent. The discussions concerning them, in modern times, have been founded principally on the confused, contradictory, and obviously very inaccurate statements of Epiphanius, in the latter part of the fourth century. But all the ancient accounts of them agree, in affirming, that they used the Gospel of Matthew in its original language, with a text more or less pure. This would not have been said of them, had they not said it of themselves. They comprehended, as appears, the generality of Jewish Christians, and were the successors and representatives of those early converts in Judea, who were all "zealous for the law," and regarded with dislike or distrust the preaching of St. Paul.\* There seems to have been but little intermixture among them of those Jews, the Hellenists, to whom, as living in foreign countries, the Greek language was often more familiar than that of their own nation. Thus, using the Gospel of Matthew, which was written in their native language, and, as there seems no doubt, with particular reference to Jewish Christians, they neglected the other Gospels. Their testimony, in receiving the Gospel of Matthew as his work, is blended with that of the common mass of Christians. Nor is it important to urge it any further; but it may be worth while, here as elsewhere, to keep in mind those considerations, formerly presented,† which show that the direct proof of the genuineness of any one of the Gospels is an indirect proof of the genuineness of all.

But there is another aspect in which this subject is to be viewed. The fact, that the Jewish Christians generally did not use the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John, is to be cou-



sidered in connection with the fact of the reception of those Gospels by the whole body of Gentile Christians. We have already taken notice of some of the inferences resulting from this consideration.\* But the subject well deserves further consideration.

Christianity had its origin among the Jews. From them it was communicated to the Gentiles, between whom and the Jews there had been previously a wide separation. This separation continued between the Jewish Christians generally and the Gentile Christians. With the exception of the Gospel of Matthew, the former did not use the Gospels received by the latter. It was not, therefore, from the main body of Jewish converts that the Gentile Christians received the books, or, to say the least, three of the books, which obtained universal reception among them, as genuine and authentic histories of Jesus. But these books did not have their origin among the Gentile Christians. They are evidently the works of Jewish writers.

From whom, then, and when, did the Gentile Christians receive them? There were preachers of the Gospel to the Gentiles, — like St. Paul and his associates; like Barnabas, the early friend of St. Paul; like Peter, who defended their cause before the assembled Church at Jerusalem; like the companion of his travels, the evangelist Mark; and like John, who spent the latter part of his life among them, — men enlightened by the spirit of God, who, in the first age of Christianity, communicated its great truths to the Gentiles, and called upon them to embrace it, teaching them that God had made no difference between them and the Jews as to a participation of its blessings. These early missionaries sent by God broke through the inveterate prejudices of their nation; they made an opening in the "partition-wall" which separated Gentiles from Jews; and from them, together with the religion itself,

\* See p. 107, seqq.; p. 50, seqq.

must the Gospel have been received by the Gentile Christians.

The prejudices which had been broken through by the apostles and their associates quickly closed round the remaining body of Jewish Christians, who were very soon regarded as an heretical sect, under the name of Ebionites. After the apostolic age, there were no missionaries from their number for the conversion of the Gentile world.

St. John is supposed to have been the last survivor of that noble company of the first preachers of Christ to the heathen world, through whom we who are not Jews by descent have received the blessings of our religion. Before his death, the Jewish nation had been trampled to the earth. But the Gospels are unquestionably the work of Jewish authors. This being the state of the case, it is a supposition utterly incredible, that, after the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), three writers should have risen up among the Jews, not apostles nor associates of apostles, but free from the narrow spirit of their nation, and zealous for the conversion of the Gentiles, who, to effect this object, composed three spurious Gospels under the names of Mark, Luke, and John. But the improbability does not stop here; for it must further be supposed, that these three anonymous Jews put forward their Gospels, not only some time after the death of St. John, as well as of the other two pretended authors, but some time after the death of those who had known them familiarly; and, still more, that those Jews, though they could not procure reception or countenance for their works among their own countrymen, succeeded effectually in deluding the whole body of Gentile Christians throughout the world, — though it must have been at a pretty late period that they undertook to accomplish this object.

Such, however, are the suppositions that must be resorted to, if it be denied that the Gospels were written by the authors to whom they are ascribed, and passed with the religion itself to

the first converts from heathenism, sanctioned and certified by its earliest missionaries. The undisputed facts relating to the history of the Gospels, especially the fact that three of them were not used by the main body of Jewish Christians, make it evident that those books were received by the Gentile world through the channel of the first preachers of Christianity; that they were received from apostles and their associates.

## CHAPTER II.

### GENERAL ACCOUNT OF THE GNOSTICS.—STATE OF OPINION AMONG THE GREAT BODY OF CHRISTIANS DURING THE SECOND CENTURY.

WE here take leave of the Ebionites, and enter on a much more extensive and difficult subject. Our attention will now be confined to the GNOSTICS.

The Greek word rendered *Gnostic* denoted, in its primary meaning, an enlightened man; and is commonly used by Clement of Alexandria to signify an enlightened Christian, a Christian philosopher.\* In this sense, it was assumed as a designation by those heretics to whom the name is now restricted. The heretical Gnostics were divided into many particular sects; but there were striking characteristics common to them all, by which they were distinguished from the great body of Christians. Their religion was eclectic. While some of their contemporaries among the Heathens, of a similar cast of mind to their own,—the later Platonists,—were forming systems in opposition to, and in rivalry of, Christianity, they, on the contrary, incorporated into their theology the historical facts and some of the essential doctrines of our faith.

\* This meaning survived the application of the word to the Gnostic heretics. In the Lexicon ascribed to Zonaras, who lived in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Γνωστικός (a "Gnostic") is defined to be "one perfectly conformed to the truth."

In the systems thus composed by the Gnostics, foreign as they were from pure Christianity, the ministry of Christ held a very important place. It was the key-stone of their hypotheses.

Some of the leaders of the Gnostic sects appear to have been generally regarded in their day as men of more than common learning and ability; and their systems were so accordant with conceptions and habits of thinking which then prevailed, as to obtain a considerable degree of reputation and credence. Of the doctrines maintained by them, it is necessary to our purpose to give some general account, which, in order that it may be at all satisfactory, or afford ground for a correct estimate of the character of those doctrines, will lead us to look beyond the Gnostics considered in themselves, and to view them in their relations to the state of things in which they existed.

By the generality of Christians, they were regarded as adversaries, not as fellow-disciples; and they, in return, looked upon the many as unenlightened followers of Christ, who did not comprehend the essential character of his mission, were ignorant of the true God, whom he came to reveal, and mistook for that God, who had been before unknown, the inferior being who was the god of the Jews. With the exception of the Marcionites, they appear generally to have considered themselves as distinguished from all others, in their original conformation, by the peculiar possession of a spiritual principle, implanted in their nature, which was a constant source of divine illumination. Thus, in examining into the genuineness of the Gospels, the early Gnostics present themselves as an independent set of witnesses, widely separated, in their opinions and feelings, from the catholic Christians. Their doctrines were, at the same time, of such a character, as to seem, at first view, to admit of no reconciliation with the contents of the Gospels. "It was impossible," says Gibbon, "that the Gnostics could receive our present Gospels, many parts of which (particularly in the

resurrection of Christ) are directly, and, as it might seem, designedly, pointed against their favorite tenets."\* If, notwithstanding this supposed impossibility, we should find that the Gnostics actually bear testimony to the genuineness of the Gospels, their evidence must clearly have a distinct and peculiar value.

It is true, that other sects, whose doctrines may appear to an intelligent Christian as irreconcilable with the contents of the Gospels as those of the Gnostics, have been zealous in asserting the claim of those books to the highest deference. But this has been done under very different circumstances. The systems of those sects have been slowly formed, during ages of ignorance and false reasoning; the true sense of the language of the Gospels has been gradually obliterated, and false meanings, derived from a barbarous theology, have been substituted in its place; the considerations necessary to be attended to, in order to understand the words of Jesus, have been disregarded; and thus, the key to their true explanation being lost or thrown away, modes of interpretation have been introduced, at once so irrational and so unsettled, that, by their application, the Scriptures may be made to speak any doctrine. Those systems, having no aid from reason, but being assailed by it on every side, have been obliged to rely, for their sole support, on the supposititious meanings assigned to the Scriptures; and thus, in the very act of falsifying the testimony of the books appealed to, it has become essential to maintain their credit. At the same time, the prevailing belief in the genuineness of the Gospels, not being the result of any investigation of the subject, had assumed the character of an inveterate and unassailable prejudice. But the case of the Gnostics was widely different. Their systems were in harmony with many of the philosophical speculations of their

age, and relied for support upon doctrines already received, rather than upon the misinterpretation of the Scriptures. If they admitted the Gospels as genuine, they did not feel obliged, in consequence, to admit their authority as final: they appealed to other sources of religious knowledge, to their own reasonings, to oral tradition, — by which they pretended that the higher and esoteric doctrines of Jesus had been transmitted to them, — and to the divine light within, the privilege of their spiritual nature.

But it is particularly to be observed, that the earlier Gnostics lived at a time, when, if the Gospels be not genuine, the question respecting their credit and value must have been entirely open and unsettled; that, upon the supposition of their not being genuine, they were works of the contemporaries of those Gnostics, or of individuals of the age immediately preceding; and that their late origin, therefore, must have been so notorious, that no process of reasoning could have been required to make it evident that they were not genuine. But, in rejecting their authority on such indisputable ground, the Gnostics, instead of carrying on a doubtful and disadvantageous contest, would have gained a decisive triumph over their opponents, by simply pointing out the fact, that the catholic system of faith, so far as it contradicted their own, was founded on writings pretending to an authority which they did not possess.

It follows from what has been said, that the nature and value of the evidence which the Gnostics afford for the genuineness of the Gospels cannot be understood and correctly estimated without some acquaintance with their history and doctrines. The subject is worthy of investigation; and I enter the more readily upon the explanation of it, — such explanation as it may be in my power to give, — because it is not only necessary to my present purpose, but may also open to us new views of the history of opinions, and of the

early history and of the evidences of our religion. It may be well, before proceeding farther, to advert to some of these bearings of the inquiry.

The study of the history and doctrines of the Gnostics, connected as those doctrines were with the morals and philosophy of the age, and giving birth to controversies in which much of the character of the age is exhibited, may enlarge our views of the condition of the world when Christianity was revealed; and every accession to our knowledge concerning the intellectual and moral state of men in those times is adapted to strengthen our conviction of the divine origin of our religion.

In order to have a full conception of the evidences and value of Christianity, we must be informed of the state of the human character that existed at the time of its introduction, and with which it had to struggle. As our prospect widens and becomes more distinct, we may be reminded of the ancient doctrine of the East, that this world is the battle-field of the good and evil spirits who divide the universe. The power of our religion will be perceived in the strength of the obstacles over which it triumphed. Its great truths, in their own nature intelligible as they are sublime, were then "dark with excessive bright." Men's minds were overwhelmed by their grandeur and novelty, and could not open to their full comprehension. In their colossal simplicity, they stood opposed to the baseless and visionary speculations which then passed for philosophy. The very plainness of their evidence, appealing only to the authority of God, as made evident by miraculous displays of his power, was in striking contrast with the reasoning of the age, resting on dreams, dealing in slippery words, and full of shallow subtleties. The morality of the Gospel, having for its object to free the individual from whatever may injure himself or others, and to teach him that his highest good consists in



acting for the common good of all, presented itself in strange contrast with the unabashed selfishness, the loathsome sensuality, the rapacity, violence, and cruelty, which overspread society. This morality was, at the same time, very different from that magnificent but impracticable scheme which, though fully developed only by the Stoics, was presented in its chief lineaments by all the higher philosophy of the age,—the professed purpose of which was to aggrandize, and, as it were, deify its disciple, by raising him above all passion and suffering; to teach him, as the sum of duty, to bear and to forbear; and to place him in a state of stern, insulated quiet, unmoved by all around him. The first word which our religion addressed to men was “Reform.” It came to re-create their characters, to change them in their own view from earthly to immortal beings, to call forth new affections, to supply new principles and aims, and to teach “the new doctrine of piety;”<sup>\*</sup> making men feel what they had not before conceived of,—their relations to God. By revealing him, it came to annihilate the superstitions of the heathen world, blended as they were with all its history, philosophy, eloquence, and poetry; forming an essential part of the machinery of government, entering into the daily habits of common life, and the source of those frequent festivals, games, and shows, which, barbarous and licentious as they often were, afforded to the many their most exciting pleasures. A principle was at work which had to contend with all that existed on earth, except what might remain uncorrupted in the moral nature of man.

The strength of the errors that were to be overcome may be partially estimated by their continued operation to the present day, appearing in false doctrines, which were gradually introduced, and are now incorporated with the professed faith of most Christians; in modern systems of what is

\* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

called philosophy, allied in thought and language to the mysticism of the later Platonists, and the pantheism of other ancient theologists; and in the influences of pagan history and literature upon our taste and morals, in changing and debasing that standard of human excellence which Christianity would lead us to form.

Such being the state of the ancient world, the conceptions of our religion entertained by its early converts were not only imperfect, but were modified and discolored by the universal prevalence of error. These converts might change their hearts and lives, but they could not renovate their minds. They could not divest themselves of the whole character of their age, so as fully to comprehend the great truths they had been taught, in their proper bearing upon the conceptions and doctrines prevailing around them. They could not break up all their previous associations of thought and feeling, originate new and rational systems of the highest philosophy, and pursue only those correct modes of reasoning, which, even at the present day, are but partially understood, and imperfectly applied to all subjects connected with our moral and intellectual nature. They could not at once do for themselves what many centuries have been slowly effecting for the wisest of modern times.

The causes which operated in common upon Christian converts, to alloy the doctrines of our faith with the errors of the age, produced their most remarkable effects among the Gnostics. More visionary and more self-confident than the catholic Christians, they relied more on their philosophy, and less on the written records of our religion. Many of them, also, were among the mystics of those times, and trusted for guidance to their divine inward light. Hence, the Gnostics proceeded to extravagances, from which the catholic Christians kept aloof; but, in comparing together the distinctive opinions of the two parties, we shall find that their conceptions often approximated each other, and that,

with essential differences of doctrine, there were also remarkable analogies and coincidences.

Thus, though the Gnostic doctrines were in stronger contrast with the truths of Christianity than the errors and misconceptions of the catholic Christians, yet, as they had ultimately the same origin or occasion, as they are to be traced alike to the false notions which had prevailed in the world, either among heathens or Jews, their history may serve to bring out to view more distinctly the direct and indirect operation of some of those causes of error which enthralled the minds of the early catholic Christians; to make us apprehend more clearly, that there might be, and were, many conceptions of the wisest among them which are not to be confounded with the doctrines of Christ; and to enable us to discern the real derivation of opinions that we might otherwise ascribe, as they have been ascribed, to traditionary explanations or to mere misconceptions of our faith. It is in a great measure by such investigations that Christianity may be relieved from that apparent responsibility for what, in fact, are but the errors of its disciples, which, at the present day, is a principal obstacle to its reception.

It is true, that in the fundamental opinions of the early catholic Christians, as they appear in the writings of the most eminent of their number during the first three centuries, there was nothing that essentially changed the character of our religion, or was adapted greatly to pervert its moral influence. But when we compare their writings with the New Testament, and remark the operation of the world around them on their sentiments and belief, we are, if I mistake not, irresistibly led to the conclusion, that the religion of Christ, the religion taught in the Gospels, did not come into being at any period subsequent to his time. Those who became its disciples after his death did not originate what they but imperfectly and erroneously apprehended.

They were not the authors of doctrines or of books, of which they were, in many respects, but poor expositors.

Nor, it may be added, did Christianity have its origin in any wisdom of a preceding age. Distinguishable, as it is, from the opinions of its earlier converts respecting it, it stands far more widely separated from all that preceded it, either in the Jewish or Gentile world. There is nothing human to which its origin can be traced. When we understand the Gospels, and enter into their spirit; when we consider their teachings respecting God, his inseparable relations to all his creatures, and his universal providence and love; their disclosures concerning man's immortality and the purposes of life, our duties and our prospects; their narrative, as consistent as it is wonderful, and their unparalleled portraiture of moral greatness in the character of Jesus; and when we observe that these histories are inartificial and imperfect, written in a rude style, clearly that of uneducated persons, so that their intrinsic character, even in this respect alone, precludes, as an incredible anomaly, the idea that they were the result of literary skill, the study of philosophy, or any art of man,—it becomes evident that their existence cannot be explained by any thing known or felt on earth before the events which they record. It is a phenomenon marked by its dissimilitude from all around it,—the unlikeness between the things of time and eternity, and, if I may so speak, between man and God.

As has been said, the religion of Christ is one thing, and the religion of the early Christians was another. But this renders it the more necessary, in order to estimate correctly the character of the early fathers, the early writers of eminence among the catholic Christians, that we should not forget the strong disturbing forces which acted upon their minds to draw them from the sphere of Christian truth. They labored under great disadvantages, from the universal

ignorance of the Gentile world respecting many of the new subjects presented to their inquiry. On the one hand, they were biased by the inveterate errors of their age; and on the other, so far as those errors were connected with licentiousness of life, they were repelled by them to the opposite extreme of asceticism in speculation and practice,—an extreme to which, also, they were led by their hard circumstances, as members of a suffering and persecuted sect. To judge them fairly, we must be acquainted with the principles, conceptions, and modes of reasoning, which characterized the philosophy of their times, and had modified all existing forms of thought, having been transmitted from the ancient philosophers, particularly Plato, with the whole weight of their authority. We must know what advances the human intellect had made, comprehend the influences under which their minds had been formed, and compare them, not with the most enlightened men of modern times, who have enjoyed advantages for the culture of the understanding which they never dreamed of, but with their predecessors and contemporaries. We must view them, like all other eminent men of ancient days, as figures in the age to which they belong, and not bring them prominently forward, surrounded only by modern associations. If ignorant of the philosophy of their age, we have no standard by which to judge of their intellectual powers. Nay, we shall often misunderstand their meaning, and may direct our contempt or ridicule, not against what they have said, but against our own misconception of what they have said. Now, the doctrines of the Gnostics will show us what extravagances might be advanced by those who were reputed able and learned men in the times of which we speak; and such is the connection or identity of many opinions of the Gnostics with opinions that had before been held, or were appearing simultaneously in the writings of their contemporaries, that we cannot study their systems without being led to look beyond them to the philosophy.

of the age; and, in doing so, we shall find that the Christian fathers suffer as little by a comparison with the heathen philosophers, as with the Gnostic heretic. Such are some of the considerations incidentally presented to us in the inquiry on which we are now about to enter.

The Gnostics may be separated into two great divisions, — the MARCIONITES, on the one hand, and the *THEOSOPHIC* GNOSTICS, as they may be called, on the other; this epithet being understood as referring to the imaginations of the latter respecting the Supreme God, and the spiritual world, as developed from him. Of the latter class the Valentinians are the principal representatives, as being the most considerable and numerous sect, and one the essential characteristics of which appear throughout the systems of other theosophic Gnostics. The fundamental doctrines held in common by the Valentinians and Marcionites were the following: That the material world, the visible universe, was not the work of the Supreme Being, but of a far inferior agent, the Demiurgus, or the Creator,\* who was also the god of the Jews; that the spiritual world, the Pleroma, as it was called, over which the true Divinity presided, and the material world, the realm of the Creator, were widely separated from each other; that evil was inherent in matter; that the material world, both as being material, and as being the work of an inferior being, was full of imperfection and evil; that the Saviour descended from the spiritual world, as a manifestation of the Supreme God, to reveal him to men, to reform the disorders here exist-

\* Δημιουργός, literally the "Workman." The term "Maker" might seem the preferable rendering, except that the associations with the word "Creator," when standing alone, correspond better with the conceptions of the Gnostics. But, in thus using the term "Creator," we must divest it of the idea of creation from nothing. There is no satisfactory evidence, that any of the Gnostics rejected the then common philosophical notion of eternal, uncreated matter.

ing, and to deliver whatever is spiritual from the dominion of matter; and that the Supreme God had been unknown to men, to Jews and Heathens equally, before his manifestation of himself by Christ. In their view, he was the God of the New Testament, and the Creator was the god of the Old Testament. They at the same time conceived of the Creator as exercising a moral government over men, as dispensing rewards and inflicting punishments. He, in their view, was "*Just*." But the Supreme God did not punish. He was unmingled benevolence. He was "*Good*."

In connection with these doctrines, neither the Valentinians nor the Marcionites supposed the Saviour to have had a proper human body of flesh and blood, in which corruption would have dwelt. The Valentinians, however, ascribed to him a real though not a human body, while the Marcionites regarded his apparent body as a mere phantom. Those who maintained the latter opinion were called *Docetæ*, a name for which we may give an equivalent in the word *Apparitionists*. But this name was also sometimes, if not commonly, extended to all who denied that Christ had a proper human body; and, thus used, comprehended the generality of the Gnostics.

In the systems of the Marcionites and Valentinians, the Creator appears as one. Other sects, it is said, believed the material world to have been formed by angels. But, among those angels, one was generally, perhaps universally, regarded as pre-eminent, and as the god of the Jews; that is, as one to whom the name *Creator* may be distinctively applied. The Valentinians themselves sometimes spoke of the Creator as an angel, and associated with him, in the government of his works, other beings whom he had produced, giving them also the name of angels.

Such were the common doctrines of the Gnostics. Their fundamental distinction may be regarded as consisting in the

belief, that the material universe was not formed by the Supreme Being, but by some inferior being or beings; and that this being, or one of these beings, was the god of the Jews. In the writings of the earlier fathers against them, the stress of the controversy concerns this topic. It was, as we might suppose, the great point at issue between them and the catholic Christians.

Thus, Tertullian, in his work against Marcion, states it to be "the principal question"\* between them; and the whole tenor of his argument shows that it was so. The principal question, he says, in commencing his work, "whence the whole controversy arises, is, whether it be allowable to introduce two gods." The main object of his work is to prove from reason, from the Old Testament, from the Gospels, and from the Epistles, that the Supreme Being, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the same being with the Creator of the material universe, and the God of the Jews.

Irenæus is our great authority concerning the theosophic Gnostics, of whom alone he treats, to the exclusion of Marcion and his followers, for a reason to be hereafter mentioned. In the introduction to his work, he assigns, as the cause of his undertaking to write against the heretics, that they "overturn the faith of many, leading them away, by a pretence of superior knowledge, from Him who framed and ordered the universe, as if they had something higher and better to show them than the God who made heaven and earth, and all that is therein; bringing ruin upon their converts, by giving them injurious and irreligious sentiments toward the Creator."† In the first book of his work, he gives an account of the opinions of the Gnostics. In his second book, he undertakes to confute them, by showing their intrinsic incredibility, and commences by saying, "It will be proper to

\* *Advers Marcion.*, lib. i. c. 1; Opp. p. 366, ed. Priorii.

† *Cont. Hæres.*, lib. i. *Præf* § 1, p. 2, ed. Massuet.



begin with the first and principal topic, God, the Creator, whom they blaspheme, who is God and Lord alone, sole author of all, sole Father." \* In concluding the book, he affirms that what he has been maintaining is consonant to what was taught by Christ and his apostles, by the Law and the Prophets, namely, that there is one God and Father of all, and that all things were made by him, and not by angels, nor by any other Power. † He then begins his third book by proving this doctrine from the Gospels, which, he says, all teach "that there is one God, the Maker of heaven and earth, who was announced by the prophets; and one Messiah, the Son of God." ‡ In the last paragraph of this book, he prays that the heretics may not persevere in their errors, but that, being "converted to the Church of God, Christ may be formed within them; and that they may know the Maker of this universe, the only true God and Lord of all." — "Thus we pray for them," he says, "loving them better than they love themselves." He then states, that in his next book he shall endeavor to induce them, by reasoning from the words of Christ, "to abstain from speaking evil of their Maker, who alone is God;" and accordingly, in the commencement of the fourth book, he repeats similar representations of their fundamental doctrine, which, with others to the same effect, it is unnecessary to subjoin.

"I will endeavor," says Origen, § "to define who is a heretic. All who profess to believe in Christ, and yet affirm that there is one god of the Law and the Prophets, and another of the Gospels, and maintain that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was not He who was proclaimed by the Law and the Prophets, but another, I know not what, God, wholly unknown and unheard of, — all such we consider as heretics, however they may set off their

\* Lib. ii. c. 1, § 1, p. 116.

† Lib. ii. c. 35, § 4, p. 171.

‡ Lib. iii. c. 1, § 2, p. 174.

§ Apud Pamphili Mart. Apolog. pro Origene; in Origen. Opp. iv., Append., p. 22.

doctrines with different fictions. Such are the followers of Marcion and Valentinus and Basilides."\*

In the fifth century, Theodoret wrote a history of heresies. He speaks of the Gnostics as nearly extinct, and professes that his accounts of them are derived from preceding writers.† He treats of them in his first book; and this book, he says, contains "an account of the fables of those who have imagined another Creator, and, denying that there is one principle of all things, have introduced other principles which have no existence; and who say that the Lord appeared to men in the semblance of a man only."‡

Our information concerning the distinguishing doctrines common to the Gnostics, in the general form in which they have been stated, is full and satisfactory; and these doctrines there is no difficulty in comprehending. But the same cannot be said of the transcendental speculations of the theosophic Gnostics. These concerned the supposed production from the Supreme Divinity of hypostatized § attributes and *ideas*, forming beings whom, in common with him, they denominated Æons, or Immortals;—the full development of the Deity by those emanations, constituting the Pleroma; || — the

\* The original adds, "and those who call themselves Tethians;" where, for "Tethians," I suppose we should read "Sethians," a name assumed by some of the Gnostics, who regarded Seth as the progenitor or prototype of the *spiritual* among men.

† See the Introduction to his "Hæreticarum Fabularum Compendium," and the Preface to the Second Book; Opp. iv. pp. 187–189, 218, ed. Sirmond.

‡ Ibid, p. 188.

§ I use the term "hypostatize," and its relatives, to express the ascribing of proper personality to what in its nature is devoid of it.

|| Πλήρωμα, *Fulness, Completeness, Perfection*, here signifying the full, complete, perfect development of the Deity. The word, though with a change of its meaning, was borrowed by the Gnostics from St. Paul. See Eph. i. 23; iii. 19. Col i. 19; ii. 9.

realm of God, the spiritual world (in contradistinction to the *animal* and material), which was likewise called the Pleroma; all properly spiritual existences being considered as deriving their substance from that of the Infinite Spirit;—and the mingling of spirit with matter; the causes which led to the formation of the material world, and the relations of this to the spiritual world.

These speculations of the theosophic Gnostics were very foreign from any conceptions with which we are familiar. They seem to have assumed no definite and permanent shape, but to have varied according to the imaginations of different sects and individuals; every one, as Tertullian says, moulding what he had received to his own liking; the disciple thinking himself as much at liberty as his master to innovate at pleasure.\* Nearly all the direct information concerning them, on which we can rely with any confidence, is derived from their earlier controversial opponents, the fathers of the second and third centuries; and it cannot be supposed, that those writers furnish a full explanation of the theories of the Gnostics in their most intelligible and plausible form. It was the business of the fathers to divest them of all adventitious recommendations, to remove whatever might dazzle and deceive the eye, and to show, not their coincidence with any existing forms of philosophy, but their essential errors, their intrinsic incongruity, and their opposition to reason and Scripture. They have taken them to pieces, to exhibit their

\* Tertullian., *De Præscript. Hæretic*, c. 42, pp. 217, 218.—Of the sect of the Marcosians, Irenæus treats at much length, probably because they prevailed particularly in the part of Gaul where he resided (lib. i. c. 13, § 7, p. 65). He concludes his account of them with saying, "But, since they disagree among themselves in doctrine and teaching, and those who are acknowledged as the more recent affect every day to find out something new, and to bring forth what never had been thought of before, it is hard to describe the notions of all of them" (lib. i. c. 21, § 15, p. 98). The same, or nearly the same, might, I conceive, have been said of every other body of theosophic Gnostics, who were classed together as a sect.

defects ; and it is not easy, or rather it is impossible, to restore them as they were originally put together. At the same time, clearness of thought, precision of language, and accuracy in reporting opinions, were not characteristics of the writers of that age. Beside this, the Gnostics did not understand themselves ; and it was impossible, therefore, that the fathers should understand them.

All these causes combine to occasion peculiar difficulty in forming a just notion of the speculations of the theosophic Gnostics. If their own writings had remained to us entire, no common acuteness would probably have been necessary to follow the process by which visionary conceptions and allegories passed into doctrines ; to apprehend the state of mind, the confused mingling of imperfect, changing, and inconsistent fancies, out of which their theories arose ; to determine where mysticism was brightening into meaning ; or to detect what portion of truth, under some disguise or other, may have entered into and been neutralized in their composition. As in so many metaphysical and theological systems, from the age of Plato to our own, we should doubtless have found, that their dialect admitted of but a very partial translation into the universal language of common sense. With the best guidance, we should have been unable to place ourselves in the same position with the Gnostics, under the same circumstances, so as to discern the spectral illusions which, in the dawn of Christianity, they saw pictured on the clouds, and fancied to be celestial visions.

Still, even as regards their theosophic doctrines, enough may be ascertained for our purpose ; perhaps all that is of importance in relation to the history of opinions, or the history of our religion. After fixing our attention on them steadily, what appeared at first view altogether confused and monstrous begins to assume a form better defined ; the great features common to their systems show themselves more distinctly, and we are able to discern

their likeness to other modes of opinion that have widely prevailed.

The fathers, as has been said, were but poor interpreters of the dreams of the theosophic Gnostics. But, as regards the whole history of the Gnostics, there is constant need of caution in admitting, and care in scrutinizing, the representations of their catholic opponents. What is related by the fathers concerning supposed heretics *of the first century* is mixed with fables and improbabilities. Their fuller accounts of the more important sects of the second century, the Marcionites and Valentinians, were founded upon the writings of members of these sects. But there are other cases, in which it admits of no doubt, that even those of the fathers who are our best authorities proceeded upon common rumor and oral information, distorted, exaggerated, and unfounded.

It often requires much acuteness and discrimination, as well as intellectual and moral fairness, to give a correct report of the system of an individual or a sect, especially when its doctrines, being involved in mysticism, present no definite ideas, even to the minds of those by whom they are held. Some of the ancient philosophers, particularly Plato, could they have had a foreknowledge of the works of their admirers and expositors, in ancient and modern times, would, I believe, have wondered greatly at much which they could, and much which they could not, understand. But the fathers did not write of the Gnostics as admiring historians. With the partial exception of Clement of Alexandria, they wrote as controvertists, whose feelings were enlisted against them. All the errors, but such as spring from intentional dishonesty, to which such controvertists are liable, are to be expected, even from those of their number on whom alone we can rely, — the fathers of the first three centuries, or the *earlier* fathers, as they may be called by way of specific distinction. Under circumstances which furnish much less excuse, the grossest mistakes are not

unfrequently committed. Thus, a German theologian of our day classes Priestley among decided atheists;\* and another, a naturalist himself, states that Locke agreed with Spinoza, Hobbes, and Hume, in believing reputed miracles to be only natural events, referring, in evidence of his assertion, to a tract by which it is clearly disproved.† A still more remarkable error concerning that great man is the statement or implication, to be found, I believe, in some writers above the lowest class, that he referred the origin of all our ideas to sensation. Many similar misrepresentations might be produced; and from such errors, committed, as it were, before our eyes, through the neglect or misuse of means of information open to all, we learn what may have been the errors of ancient writers, at a period when it was incomparably more difficult to ascertain the truth; when all communication of knowledge from a distance was tardy and imperfect; when oral accounts, with the misunderstandings and misrepresentations by which they are usually characterized, were often the only source of information attainable; and when the voice of the press, which now makes itself heard on every side, to confirm truth or to confute error, in regard to all facts that are anywhere of common notoriety, was as yet unuttered.

Thus, as reporters of the history and doctrines of the Gnostics, in their obscurer ramifications, even the earlier fathers were in a great measure disqualified, not merely by their feelings of dislike toward those heretics, but by the great difficulty of obtaining full and correct knowledge concerning them; and, we may add, by that want of accuracy of conception and representation, which they shared in common with their opponents, and with all others of their age.

We must, furthermore, keep in view their prejudices, and

Lehrbuch des Christlichen Glaubens, von August Hahn (Leipzig, 1828), p. 178.

† Institutiones Theologiæ Christianæ Dogmaticæ a I. A. L. Wegscheider, § 48, not. 2, p. 111, ed. 2dæ.

their liability to mistake, not merely as respects the doctrines, but also as respects the character and morals, of the Gnostics. We may readily believe, that vices, which were more properly to be ascribed to the depravity of individuals, were sometimes brought as general charges against the whole body to which those individuals were considered as belonging, and that the practical inferences unfavorable to morality, to be drawn from the false doctrines of the Gnostics, were represented as their common practical effects; though it is often the case, that men do not follow out in action the results of bad principles any more than of good.

In determining the truth concerning the Gnostics, we may find a concurrence of credible and contemporary testimony to what is probable in itself, and coincident or consistent with the still remaining expositions which they themselves gave of their doctrines; and consistent, also, with forms of opinion which prevailed during the period when they sprung up and flourished. This testimony, so confirmed, is sufficient to establish the leading facts concerning their character and doctrines. In proceeding farther, we must judge of the accounts given of them from the particular probabilities that each case may present, and especially from the consistency of those accounts with the truths concerning them which we have found means to settle. And, throughout this whole inquiry, particular attention must be given to the very different value of those ancient writers who have treated of the Gnostics, to the period when they lived, to their means of information, to the temper and purpose with which they wrote, and to their respective characters for correctness and truth. In this respect, as we shall hereafter see, a wide distinction is to be made among writers who have often been indiscriminately quoted, as of equal authority in regard to the history of the Gnostics.

This subject has afforded scope for an abundance of hypoth-

eses in modern times; for few facts have been so well established, and so generally acknowledged, as to stand in their way. It has been a sort of disputed province between fiction and history. We may meet, on every side, with statements respecting the Gnostics altogether unfounded. Gibbon says, that they "were distinguished as the most learned, the most polite, and most wealthy of the Christian name:"\* but the assertion is made without proof, on his own responsibility; unless, indeed, he has repeated or exaggerated the error of some preceding modern writer, of which I am not aware. The representation is such as it may readily be supposed was not derived from their ancient controversial opponents, who alone can be referred to for information concerning the subject. No one, I think, besides Gibbon, has ascribed to them the worldly distinctions of superior refinement and wealth; but the zeal for paradoxes, which prevails among many of the theological writers of our age, has shown itself in other representations. The theosophic Gnostics, though their speculations are among the most vague and inconsequent that any visionaries have produced, have been transformed into penetrating and refined philosophers, or, rather, described as "equally versed in the mysteries of Platonism, of the Cabala, of the Zend-Avesta, and of the New Testament; as belonging rather to the world of ideas than to that of sensations, and as manifesting the human soul in its sublime ecstasies."† This is the language of a writer who does not separate himself from the rest of the intellectual world by his general tone of thought and expression, or by any radical changes in the use of language. But one of the followers of the latest, darkest, and most repulsive school of German metaphysicians has likewise thought to do honor to the Gnostics, by claiming them as its progenitors.‡

\* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. xv.

† Matter, *Histoire Critique du Gnosticisme* (1828), tom. ii. p. 281.

‡ I refer to Baur, Professor of Gospel Theology in the University of



To justify such eulogies as have been bestowed on them by the writer first mentioned, their systems are professedly laid open; and though the end be not obtained, though noth-

Tubingen, a disciple of Hegel, and a writer of much note among his countrymen, who has published a large work relating to the Gnostics, entitled "The Christian Gnosis (or Gnosticism); or, the Christian Philosophy of Religion historically developed" (Tubingen, 8vo, 1835). His main purpose is to represent the Gnostics as the true religious philosophers of their times, and to exhibit the resemblance of their doctrines to the latest philosophy of religion, as developed by Jacob Boehmen, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and finally by Hegel, who has brought it nearest to perfection. The fundamental doctrine, in which he regards the Gnostics as coinciding with these modern philosophers, is one which he has arbitrarily ascribed to them. According to him, they viewed God (their Supreme God) as an unconscious, impersonal, and unintelligent being. The doctrine of Hegel teaches that all individual spirits are but modifications of one universal spirit, the only positive existence in the universe. Ideas alone are things. But this universal spirit is, in itself, unconscious, and first arrives at consciousness in its development in man. Man is the only conscious God. "The essence of religion, therefore, is the self-consciousness of God. God knows himself in a consciousness different from him, which, in itself, is the consciousness of God, but which also has reference to itself, as it knows its identity with God; an identity existing through the negation of finiteness. Thus, in one word, God is this,—to distinguish one's self from one's self, to become objective to one's self, but, in this distinction, to be absolutely identical with one's self." These words, in which Baur reports the doctrine of Hegel on the most important of subjects, seem rather the language of a man not of sane mind, than such as accords with the character of one reputed, by many of his countrymen, to be the wisest of philosophers.

After this account of "The Christian Philosophy of Religion," which, it appears, is atheism, Baur remarks, that it is evident "how intimately this philosophy is connected with Christianity, how eagerly it transfers to itself its entire substance, nay, that, in its whole purpose, it is nothing else than a scientific explanation of the problem of historical Christianity" (pp. 709, 710).

In the work of Baur, there is no critical examination of the history of the Gnostics, nor any information of value concerning them. He ascribes to them, not only without authority, but contrary to all evidence, the doctrine of an unconscious and impersonal God. His work, like those of many of his countrymen, exhibits an incapacity of thinking clearly and consistently, and of presenting a lucid and well-digested exposition of a subject; and is characterized by such a use of words, especially concerning the topics of religion, as would unsettle all their established meanings. It belongs to that class of

ing wonderful appear, yet the Gnostics, could they revive, might address their expositors in words like those which Plato puts into the mouth of Theætetus, after subjecting him to the questioning of Socrates: "By Jupiter, you have made me say more than I had in me." Nor has this too great ingenuity of explanation been confined to those who have formed an over-estimate of the spiritual acquirements of the Gnostics. In the developement of their opinions, it is not uncommon to find a striking contrast between the scanty or worthless materials that antiquity has left us, and the long and ready detail of a modern expositor, defining the particulars, and tracing the history, of a system. When

speculative writings, of which Germany has been so fertile; treating of the most important subjects, and promulgating, sometimes with dogmatical phlegm, and sometimes with heartless flippancy, doctrines the most disastrous to faith and morals. These writings are distinguished, not so much by a want of reasoning, or an evident incapacity of reasoning, as by an apparent insensibility to its necessity or use. Every thing is assumed. The most extravagant and most pernicious theories are put forward as if they consisted of self-evident propositions. Yet when the metaphysician or theologian of the day brings out his new system, resting on no truths or facts, but spun from his own brain, his disciples (*les plus sots qui toujours admirent un sot*) applaud the rigid thought and profound speculations of their master; while more intelligent readers, unaccustomed to this style of discussion without explanation or argument, are at first perplexed by a phenomenon which they cannot readily understand. These works, numerous as they are, do not belong to the literature of the world. They form a literature, if it may be so called, immiscible with any other. The speculations they contain have no alliance with those truths which human wisdom has established, or which God has revealed to us. Tennemann, the German historian of philosophy, likened the new school of German metaphysicians, as it existed in his time, to the later Platonists. Baur finds a strong resemblance between those of our day and the Gnostics. These modern metaphysicians do, in truth, belong to the age of the later Platonists and Gnostics. But they resemble them, not so much through a correspondence of doctrines, as in their mystical and barbarous obscurity, in their perversion and fabrication of language, in their arrogant claims, in their contempt for the exercise of the understanding in the investigation and establishment of truth, and in their pretending to some other foundation than reason and the revelation of God on which to rest our highest knowledge.

we look for the proof of what is affirmed, we find, perhaps, straggling authorities of doubtful credit or uncertain application; supposed analogies with opinions less understood than those of the Gnostics, to establish which, the mere shadows of meaning are to be tracked through the obscurity of Eastern theology, or some imaginary scheme of Egyptian superstition; etymological conjectures; and explanations of allegories and symbols, to which the ingenuity of the writer may give a glimmering of probability, while his page is open before us. In the words of Tertullian, *Late quæruntur incerta, lutiùs disputantur præsumpta*, — “There is a wide search after uncertainties, and a wider discussion of assumptions.” At the same time, facts that lie most open to view have been disregarded or misrepresented, or but partially stated.

In consequence, however, of all the attention which has been given to the subject, the character of the Gnostics may undoubtedly at the present day be better understood than it has been. The extravagant over-estimate of them, which appears in some modern writers, is, in part, a re-action produced by the extravagant depreciation of them which preceded it. The crude accounts of the later as well as earlier fathers were formerly received without discrimination, and without any attempt to disengage the truth from the language of controversy, or from the mass of falsehood in which it was enveloped, and consequently without any exercise of judgment on the respective credibility of the authorities adduced. The charges made against them by the later as well as earlier fathers, whether probable or not, have been repeated without examination by theological bigotry, which, connecting with the name of heretic the ideas of folly, immorality, and impiety, has given itself full scope in ascribing these bad qualities to the Gnostics. Even more sober and judicious writers have spoken of their systems as if they had just appeared, instead of having been produced many centuries ago; and

have rather compared them with an abstract standard of what they themselves deemed "sound philosophy, than viewed them relatively to the erroneous conceptions of ancient times. Their proper rank has not been assigned them among the other forms of metaphysical and religious belief, equally false and irrational, which have been or still are extensively received. But the Gnostics were prodigies neither of wisdom nor of folly. There was nothing peculiar in the character of their minds to distinguish them from numerous theorists of their own and other times. With the exception of the Marcionites, they belonged to the large class of the professors of hidden but intuitive wisdom, who exhibit to the ignorant bits of colored glass, with the air of men displaying inestimable jewels. The most eminent among them were probably far inferior to some of their opponents, to such men as Tertullian and Origen, in vigor and clearness of intellect, and in that intense conviction of the truths of religion which at once implies a sound judgment, and tends to perfect it; but I do not know that they would appear to much disadvantage, if brought into comparison with the later Platonists of the third and fourth centuries.

The Gnostics and Ebionites, as has been remarked, were the principal heretics of the first two centuries. They were both divided from the communion of catholic Christians. The Ebionites, belonging to what, in their view, was the privileged race of the Jews, kept aloof from the Gentile converts; and, among the Gnostics, the Marcionites formed separate churches of their own.\* The theosophic Gnostics, it is probable, likewise had their separate religious assemblies, unless they were prevented by the smallness of their numbers, or by what they regarded as a philosophical indifference to outward forms of religion. Tertullian, however, says generally

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\* Tertullian *advers. Marcion.*, lib. iv. c. 5, pp. 415, 416.

of the heretics, that, "for the most part, they have no churches; motherless, without a settled habitation, bereaved of faith, outcasts, they wander about without a home."\* An open separation between the Gnostics and the catholic Christians was produced, on the one hand, by the pride of the Gnostics in their peculiar opinions, and by their regarding themselves as the only spiritual believers, and all beside as lying in darkness; and, on the other hand, by the strong dislike which the great body of Christians entertained for their doctrines and pretensions, and by the brief profession of faith (the origin of what was afterward called "The Apostles' Creed") required of a catechumen, after passing his noviciate, before admission to the communion. The Gnostics, however, sometimes represented their exclusion from the Church as unjust. Irenæus says of the Valentinians, —

"For the sake of making converts of those of the Church, they address discourses to the multitude, by which they delude and entice the more simple, imitating our modes of expression to induce them to become more frequent hearers, and complaining to them of us, that when they think as we do, say the same things, and hold the same doctrine, we abstain without reason from their communion, and call them heretics."†

Till toward the middle of the third century, when *the* heretics were spoken of in general terms, the Gnostics alone were for the most part intended. Thus, for example, Clement of Alexandria sets forth his design to "show to all the heretics, that there is one God and one Lord omnipotent clearly proclaimed by the Law and the Prophets, in connection with the blessed Gospel;"‡ a proposition requiring to be proved only against the Gnostics. So also Irenæus, in the Preface to his fourth book, disregarding his own previous mention of

\* De Præscript. Hæretic., c. 42, p. 218.

† Cont. Hæres., lib. iii. c. 15, § 2, p. 203.

‡ Stromat., lib. iv. § 1, p. 564, ed. Potter.

the Ebionites, speaks of all heretic blasphemy against our Maker and Preserver."

But, in considering the subject of the early heretics, it is to be remarked, that among the catholic Christians, their contemporaries, there was great freedom of speculation, and great diversity of opinion, till after the time of Origen. Probably no standard of orthodoxy was generally received, much more comprehensive than what has been called the Apostles' Creed; and the opinions of no individual writer were conformable to any of the standards which have been since established. In comparing Tertullian with Origen, the one the most eminent defender of the common faith among the Greeks, and the other among the Latins, and both, after their death, reputed as heretics, we not only find in them a wholly different cast of mind and temper, but the speculations of the one are in many respects diverse from, and opposite to, those of the other; while those of each of them are often very remote from what is the general belief of Christians at the present day. The author of the Clementine Homilies seems, in ancient times, to have escaped the imputation of being a heretic; yet, among other doctrines widely different from the more common faith, he brought forward a theory, to be elsewhere noticed, respecting the Jewish Law and the Old Testament, in opposition to the Gnostics, which approached little nearer than their own to the opinions afterwards established. Tertullian wrote warmly against Hermogenes, who maintained that evil had its source in eternal, unoriginated matter. Yet Hermogenes does not appear to have been separated from the communion of the catholic Church; and probably not a few other catholic Christians held, in common with him, a doctrine so prevalent in pagan philosophy. It may be observed, that Hermogenes gave his name to no sect, which

seems to show that there was nothing extraordinary in his opinions being held by a Christian. Tertullian also wrote against Praxeas, who opposed the speculations which had been introduced concerning the proper personality of the Logos. His zeal was inflamed by the circumstance, that Praxeas had been an opponent of the Montanists, of which sect Tertullian had become a member. But he tells us, that the greater part of Christians, "the simple, not to say the unwise and ignorant," favored the opinions of Praxeas.\* And, to mention but one other example, there is no ground for supposing, that Tertullian himself, after becoming a Montanist, was rejected from the communion of the catholic Church; though it is true, that the Montanists were soon regarded as a heresy separated from it.

The state of Christians, then, during the second century, presents a very remarkable appearance. By the side of the great body of Gentile Christians, among whom such freedom of speculation prevailed, we find another smaller body of Gentile Christians, the Gnostics, agreeing with the former in acknowledging Christ as a divine teacher, but separated from them by an impassable gulf, as holding doctrines which rendered the amalgamation of the two parties impossible. Notwithstanding some striking analogies between their speculations, there was no gradual transition from one system to the other. The separation was abrupt and broad. It consisted in the fundamental doctrine of the Gnostics, that the Creator, or the principal Creator, of the universe, the god of the Jews, was not the Supreme Divinity and the God of Christians.

The scheme of the Gnostics is, without doubt, to be regarded, in part, as a crude attempt to solve the existence of evil in the world; a subject which engaged their attention in

common with that of other religious theorists of their age. But the desire to solve this problem was not, I conceive, the principal occasion of the existence of Gnosticism. This, I think, is to be found in the hereditary aversion of Gentiles to Judaism; in the traditionary views of the Old Testament, communicated by the Jews from whom it was received; and in the impossibility which the Gnostics found of reconciling the conceptions of God that it presents, with their moral feelings, and with those conceptions of him which they had derived from Christianity. Nor in this respect did they stand alone. A large portion, we know not how large, of the catholic Christians, including some of the most eminent and intellectual of their number, equally regarded much in the Jewish Law and history as irreconcilable with correct morality and just notions of God, if understood in its obvious sense. They, however, as we shall hereafter see, took a very different course from that of the Gnostics, in escaping from the difficulty with which they were pressed.

Regarding the aversion of the Gentiles to Judaism as the principal occasion of Gnosticism, we may readily understand why the whole body of early heretics among the Gentile converts became Gnostics. As soon as men's attention was distinctly fixed upon the subject, nothing but a thorough and strongly operative faith in Christianity could enable a Gentile Christian to subdue the prejudices, and overcome the difficulties, which stood in the way of his acknowledging the Old Testament to have the divine authority that was claimed for it.

To the opinions of the Gnostics respecting Judaism we shall recur hereafter. But other topics must be first attended to.



## CHAPTER III.

### ON THE EXTERNAL HISTORY OF THE Gnostics, AND THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION CONCERNING THEM.

IRENÆUS pretends, that all the Gnostics derived their existence from Simon, the magician of Samaria, who is mentioned in the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. He says, that "all heresies had their origin in him," — that he was "the father of all heretics."\* All those, he says, who in any way corrupt the truth, or mar the preaching of the Church, are disciples and successors of Simon, the Samaritan magician; although, as he honestly adds, "they do not acknowledge him as their master."† The same representation of Simon appears in other, succeeding fathers. But the information of Irenæus and his contemporaries, concerning particular personages and events in the history of Christianity during the first century, except so far as it was derived from the New Testament, was very imperfect and uncertain; and their accounts of Simon are not to be implicitly received.

But there is no doubt, that there was, in the first century, a Simon, a Samaritan, a pretender to divine authority and supernatural powers, who for a time had many followers, who stood in a certain relation to Christianity, and who may have held some opinions more or less similar to those of the

\* Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 23, § 2, p. 99; lib. iii. Præf. p. 173; lib. ii. Præf. p. 115.

† Lib. i. c. 27, § 4, p. 106.

Gnostics. Justin Martyr mentions him and his followers several times, but gives no account of his doctrines. He only states, that he deceived men by magical arts, and that almost all the Samaritans (the countrymen of Justin) "acknowledged and worshipped him as the first God," "over all rule, authority and power;" and affirmed, that a woman, whom he carried about with him, named Helena, was the first (hypostatized) conception of his, that is, of the divine mind.\* These opinions seem to imply an annihilation of common sense in his followers; but they admit, as we shall see, of some explanation, that may serve to reconcile them to our apprehensions. Justin does not identify the Simon of whom he speaks with the Simon mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles;† and, in modern times, some of the learned have contended that they were different individuals. But Luke describes the Simon whom he mentions as practising magical arts, so as to deprive the Samaritan nation of their senses, and as declaring himself to be some great personage; and he adds, that all, high and low, affirmed him to be the Power of God, called Great.‡ When we compare Luke's account with that of Justin, it appears incredible that the two writers should be speaking of two different individuals, who bore the same name, who were conspicuous in the same country, Samaria, and who likewise were contemporaries; for Justin says of the Simon whom he mentions, that he was at Rome during the reign of Claudius. Believing the accounts of both, therefore, to relate to the same person, we may observe, that Simon, according to Luke, suffered himself to be regarded as a manifestation of what was probably considered as the highest power of God. From this, it was an easy transition for his followers to speak of him as

I. Apolog., p. 38, seqq., p. 84; II. Apolog., p. 134; Dial. cum Tryph., p. 397, ed. Thirlby.

† Chap. viii. 9-24.

‡ Acts viii. 9, 10. In the tenth verse, I adopt the reading, *Οὗτός ἐστιν ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ καλουμένη μεγάλη*.

a manifestation of God, or as God made manifest to men, and thus to represent him as God himself. I have here supposed this account to have been given of him by his followers. Some of the fathers subsequent to Justin affirm, that Simon himself claimed to be God. But this was not unlikely to be said, if his adherents so regarded him ; for the later opinions of a sect were not uncommonly ascribed to its founder. But, if Simon did use such language concerning himself, it may still be explained in a similar manner. In the assertions which he or his followers made concerning Helena, there was, I conceive, a like vague use of words ; but through the strange accounts given of her, which it is not worth while to detail, we may perhaps discern that she was regarded as the symbol, or the manifestation, of that portion of spirituality which (according to a common conception of the Gnostics) had become entangled in matter, and for the liberation of which the interposition of the Deity was required.

From all the notices of Simon, it does not seem likely that he much affected the character of a speculative philosopher or theologian, or was solicitous to establish any system of doctrines. He appears to have been a bold, artful, vainglorious, dishonest adventurer, claiming to possess supernatural powers, and having much skill in obtaining control over the minds of others. In Josephus, there is mention of a Simon, pretending to be a magician, who, somewhere about twenty years after the events recorded in the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, was employed by Felix, then Procurator of Judæa, to persuade Drusilla, the wife of Azizus, King of Emesa, to forsake her husband, and marry Felix ; which Drusilla was prevailed on to do.\* It is not improbable that this was the same Simon who is spoken of by St. Luke. Whether he were so or not, the Simon connected with the

\* Josephi Antiq., lib. xx. c. 7, § 2. — Drusilla is mentioned, Acts xxiv.

early history of Christianity may be classed with certain impostors and fanatics, not uncommon in the age in which he lived, who, proceeding on the doctrines of the Pythagorean Platonists (as they may be called), pretended, through mystical exercises of mind, to have attained a communion with the invisible world, and to possess a power, which they denominated *theurgy*, of performing supernatural works by divine assistance. He may be compared with his contemporary, Apollonius of Tyana, whose works Hierocles, an early enemy of Christianity, represented as equalling or excelling those of our Lord; or with a somewhat later impostor, Alexander, the Paphlagonian prophet, on whom Lucian poured out his invective. Like pretensions to magical power were common among the other extravagances of the later Platonists. Plotinus, the most eminent of the sect, was, according to the account of his disciple Porphyry (famous for his work against Christianity), a great theurgist; and Proclus, than whom none of these philosophers had more alacrity in diving into the deepest and darkest mysteries, is said by his friend and biographer, Marinus, to have been able to bring rain from heaven, to stop earthquakes, and to expel diseases. Simon had learned in a similar school; and though he was, probably, more of an impostor than a fanatic, yet a religious impostor can hardly be very successful without a mixture of fanaticism. If he succeed in deceiving others, he commonly succeeds, partially at least, in deceiving himself. The false opinion which he creates in those about him re-acts on his own mind. Simon, we may suppose, like the generality of men in his age, was a believer in the power of magic, or theurgy; and, when he saw the miracles performed by Philip, was filled with astonishment, and regarded him as operating through magical powers unknown to himself. Giving credit, at the same time, to the accounts of the miracles of Jesus, he probably thought him to have been a great theurgist, and wished to become possessed of the secrets which he imagined him

to have communicated to his disciples. Being confirmed in this state of mind by witnessing the effects produced by the imposition of the hands of the apostles, he did what naturally occurred to him: he offered money to purchase their disclosure. He was at first humbled and terrified by the severe rebuke of Peter: but no evil immediately followed; and it appears, from the further accounts of him, that he resumed confidence, pursued his former course of life, and was excited to set himself up as a rival of our Lord.

Of the particular events of his subsequent life, little is known. It is not probable that he left any writings behind him.\* Justin Martyr says, that he visited Rome, and there displayed his pretended magical powers.† Irenæus relates, that he was honored by many as a god, and that images of him and Helena — the former fashioned as Jupiter, and the latter as Minerva — were worshipped by his followers; ‡ and Justin says, that there was at Rome a statue dedicated to him as a god.

The history of Simon is an object of interest from the mention of him by St. Luke, and from his early connection with Christianity. The accounts of him, however, afford no

About the end of the fourth century, Jerome, in a single passage (Opp. iv p. i. col. 114), speaks of books written by Simon: "Qui se magnam dicebat esse Dei virtutem; hæc quoque inter cætera in suis voluminibus scripta dimittens: 'Ego sum scilicet Dei; ego sum speciosus, ego Paracletus, ego omnipotens, ego omnia Dei.'" Except as a mystical expression of Pantheism, the passage is somewhat too blasphemous for one readily to believe it to have been written by any man in his senses. In regard to books ascribed to Simon, if such really existed in Jerome's time, he is far too late an authority to afford any proof of their genuineness; and such books are mentioned by no preceding writer. Beausobre (*Histoire du Manichéisme*, i. 259, 260) maintains, what I doubt not is true, that Jerome did not take his pretended quotation from any work of Simon, nor any work which had been commonly believed to be Simon's; though, in doing so, he has destroyed the only evidence for the opinion, which he himself expresses, that Simon wrote books explanatory of his doctrine (*ibid.*, p. 259).

† I. Apolog., p. 39.

‡ Cont. Hæres., lib i c 23, §§ 1, 4, pp. 99, 100.

means of determining, with any particularity and assurance, what opinions he put forward ; but, whatever he taught or affirmed, he did not rest his doctrine on the authority of Christ. Him he emulated : he was not his disciple. The only ground on which his followers might be confounded with Christians is indicated in an account of Irenæus, that Simon “taught that it was he himself who had appeared among the Jews as the Son, had descended as the Father in Samaria, and had visited other nations as the Holy Spirit.” \* Conformably to what has been before remarked, that the later opinions of a sect were often ascribed to its founder, I suppose this, or something like this, to have been said, not by Simon, but by some of his followers. Representing him as the Great Power of God, manifested in all divine communications to men, and reckoning Christianity among these communications, they thus brought themselves into some relation to it.

But I imagine them to have been held together as a sect, rather by the admiration of his supposed powers, by the worship of him as a divinity, or the Divinity, and by the study and practice of magical arts, than by the profession of any system of doctrines. However numerous they may at one time have been, they soon dwindled away. Origen charges Celsus with error for speaking of the Simonians as a Christian sect. That writer “was not aware,” he says, “that they are far from acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God ; but affirm that Simon was the Power of God. They relate various marvels of their master, who thought, that, if he could acquire such powers as he believed Jesus to possess, he should have as great influence over men.” † In another place, he expresses the opinion, that in his time there were not more than thirty Simonians in the world. He

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Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 23, § 1, p. 99.

† Cont. Cels., lib. v. n. 62; Opp. i. 625, 626.

says, that a very few were living in Palestine (the successors, we may presume, of his first Samaritan followers); but that generally, wherever the name of Simon was known, it was through the mention of him in the Acts of the Apostles.\* Elsewhere, he speaks of the sect as having ceased to exist. "There are no Simonians," he says, "remaining in the world; though Simon, in order to draw after him a greater number of followers, relieved them from the danger of death, — to which Christians were taught to expose themselves, — by teaching them to regard the worship of idols as a matter of indifference."† They worshipped, as we have seen, images of Simon and Helena. Irenæus says, what is altogether probable, that they were men of loose lives, devoted to the study of magic;‡ and their magical discipline was connected, according to Tertullian,§ with paying religious service to angels.

Such, I believe, is the amount of all that can be known, or probably conjectured, concerning Simon and his followers. But, beside the historical notices of him, he is introduced as a principal personage into an ancient work of fiction, called the Clementine Homilies. This work throws some light on the history and character of Gnosticism; but no one would pretend, that it is of any authority as regards the history of Simon, or even as regards any doctrines he may have held.

Our information being so imperfect and uncertain concerning Simon, the most noted among all who have been represented as Gnostics, either antichristian or heretical, of the first century, we may be prepared for the obscurity and doubt which cloud over the history of other individuals and of supposed heretical sects during the same period.

Cont. Cels., lib. i. n. 57, pp. 372, 373.

† Ibid., lib. vi n. 11, p. 638.

‡ Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 23, § 4, p. 100.

§ De Præscript Hæret., c. 33, p. 214.

Menander, another Samaritan, is said to have been the successor of Simon, and to have claimed, like him, to be one of the Powers of God, manifested for the salvation of men; and some stories remain of an individual called Dosithous, who, Origen says, pretended to be the Jewish Messiah.† We may conclude, perhaps, from these accounts, that, about the time of Simon, there were other less noted impostors of a similar character. These, together with him, may be considered as antichristian, not heretical.

Among the reputed heretics of the first century, using the word *heretic* in its modern sense, there is none of whom the notices are adapted to excite any considerable degree of interest or curiosity, except Cerinthus. Cerinthus is represented by Irenæus, who first mentions him, as a Gnostic leader, contemporary with St. John. He taught, according to Irenæus, that the world was not formed by the Supreme God, but by a certain Power, widely separated from him, and ignorant of his existence. He supposed Jesus not to have been born of a virgin, but of Joseph and Mary. He regarded him as having been distinguished from other men by superior wisdom and virtue. Into him, at his baptism, he believed that Christ descended, from "that Principality which is over all" (the Pleroma), in the form of a dove; and that then he announced the Unknown Father, and performed miracles. At the crucifixion, Christ, who was spiritual and impassible, re-ascended from Jesus, and Jesus suffered alone. He alone died, and rose from the dead.‡ Irenæus also relates an idle

Irenæus, lib. i. c. 23, § 5, p. 100.

† Cont. Cels., lib. i. n. 57; Opp. i. 372. Dosithous is elsewhere spoken of by Origen, in several places; but is not mentioned by Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, or Tertullian. — It may here be observed, that the short account of heresies published in the editions of Tertullian, at the end of his book, *De Prescriptione Hæreticorum*, is not the work of that father. In this account, Dosithous is spoken of.

‡ Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 26. § 1, p. 105.



tale, which he says some had heard from Polycarp, that John, while residing at Ephesus, on going to bathe, found Cerinthus in the building, and rushed out, exclaiming, "Let us fly, lest the bath should fall upon us; Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, being within."\* He further supposes, that one purpose of John in writing his Gospel was to confute the errors of Cerinthus.†

In the account given by Irenæus of the doctrines of Cerinthus, there is nothing, perhaps, intrinsically improbable; and, from this account, it would appear that Cerinthus held the characteristic doctrines of the Gnostics. But the Roman presbyter, Caius, contemporary with Irenæus, represents him as a believer in a millennium, in which sensual pleasures were to be enjoyed, and affirms him to have been the author of a certain book, which Caius so describes as to leave, I think, little doubt that he intended the Apocalypse. He speaks of Cerinthus as one "who, in Revelations, written under the name of a great apostle, introduced forged accounts of marvels, which he pretended had been shown him by angels; and taught, that, after the resurrection, there was to be an earthly reign of Christ, and that men, dwelling in Jerusalem, would again become slaves to the lusts and pleasures of the flesh."‡ In the last half of the third century, Dionysius of Alexandria, referring probably to this passage, says that some of those before him had ascribed the Apocalypse to Cerinthus, regarding it as an unintelligible and incoherent book; and he himself assigns to Cerinthus the same Jewish notions concerning the millennium which Caius had represented him as holding.§ In the account of Irenæus, Cerinthus appears as an early Gnostic; but the expectation

\* Cont. Hæres, lib. iii. c. 3, § 4, p. 177.—The same story is told by Epiphanius, not of Cerinthus, but of Ebion. Hæres., xxx § 23, pp. 148, 149.

† Lib. iii. c. 11, § 1, p. 188.

‡ Apud Euseb. Hist. Eccles., lib. iii. c. 28. § Ibid., et lib. viii. c. 25.

of a millennial reign of Christ had its origin in the belief of the Jews, antecedent to Christianity, concerning the temporal reign of their Messiah. The doctrine was Jewish in its origin and character, and altogether foreign from the conceptions of the Gnostics. They could not but revolt at the idea of assigning to their Christ a glorious reign on this earth, which, in their view, was the dwelling-place of imperfection and evil, over followers re clothed in what they regarded as the pollution of flesh. But, according to Irenæus, Cerinthus coincided with the Gnostics in holding their essential doctrines of an Unknown God, of an ignorant and imperfect Creator, and of the necessity of a divine interposition through Christ, descending from the pure world of spirits. But the strongly marked character of the Apocalypse is such as to render it impossible that it should have been written by a Gnostic, or by one holding the doctrines that Irenæus attributes to Cerinthus. The supposition would have been too glaring an absurdity to have been made by Caius, or countenanced by Dionysius. They, therefore, did not regard him as holding those doctrines. On the other hand, they not improbably considered him as an Ebionite, according to one part of the representation which, as we shall see, was given by Epiphanius concerning him.

Cerinthus is not named (and the fact is of importance in forming a judgment concerning his history) by Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, or Origen. From this we may conclude, that he was not particularly conspicuous in the first century; that he left no reputation which had made a deep impression on the minds of men; that there was no considerable body of heretics bearing his name in the second and third centuries; and that no writings of his were extant, of any celebrity. Probably there were none whatever; for except a story of Epiphanius about a pretended gospel, which we shall elsewhere have occasion to examine, none are referred to by any writer.

Justin Martyr, as has been mentioned, does not name Cerinthus. On the contrary, he implies his ignorance of any individuals who separated the man Jesus and the Æon Christ in the manner in which Cerinthus and his followers are said to have done by Irenæus. In a passage in which he is speaking of the Gnostics generally, and in which he particularly mentions the names of the leading sects, he describes them as "not teaching the doctrines of Christ, but those of the spirits of delusion;" yet "professing themselves to be Christians, and professing that Jesus who was crucified was the Lord and Christ." \* According to the account of Irenæus, Cerinthus and his followers could have made no such profession. The distinction that was in fact supposed by the theosophic Gnostics between the Æon Christ and the man Jesus, Justin, if it existed in his day, overlooked; and it could hardly, therefore, have been a doctrine that had its origin in the first century, when Cerinthus is said to have lived.

Of this reputed heretic we have further notices in Epiphanius; † but, with that writer, we enter the region of fable. After repeating, in effect, the brief account of Irenæus, he subjoins, that Cerinthus was a zealot for the Mosaic Law; ‡ though, with a disregard of probability common enough in his stories, he states, at the same time, that Cerinthus "affirmed that the giver of the Law was not good." § Epiphanius, among other fictions, pretends that he was a leader of those Jewish Christians, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, who contended that the Gentile converts must be circumcised. He thus ascribes to him the two opposite heresies of the Gnostics and the Ebionites. It may be noted also, as re-

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\* Dial cum Tryph, p. 207.

† Hæres., xxviii.; Opp i. 110, seqq.

‡ Ibid, pp. 110-113.

§ Ibid, p. 111. Such a representation, says Massuet, the Benedictine editor of Irenæus, hardly obtains credit with men in their senses. *viz fidem apud sobrios obtinet.* See his *Dissertatio Prima in Libb. Irenæi, De Cerintho*, n. 127, p. 53.

markable even among the blunders of Epiphanius, that he follows Irenæus in stating the belief of Cerinthus to have been, that Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ returned to the Pleroma;\* and shortly after asserts, that Cerinthus "dared to affirm that Christ suffered and was crucified, and was not yet raised, but would rise in the general resurrection."† He concludes by expressing his uncertainty whether Cerinthus and Merinthus were the same, or two different heretics.

From the contradictory accounts of Cerinthus; from the silence respecting him of the four Christian writers of highest eminence during the period in which they lived,—Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen; from the implication of Justin, that he knew of no heretics holding such opinions as Irenæus ascribes to Cerinthus; and from the fables which Epiphanius has connected with his name,—we may infer that very little was certainly known concerning him. Of the stories relating to him, it may seem the most probable solution, that there was a heretic of that name in the first century, of whom little or no information had been preserved, except that he was a heretic; and that, it not being certainly known in what his error consisted, Cerinthus had hence the ill-fortune to have ascribed to him divers contradictory heresies, which different writers supposed to have had their origin in that early period, and was sometimes made a Gnostic, sometimes an Ebionite, and sometimes a millenarian, and the forger of the Apocalypse.

From the fathers we can derive no information concerning the existence of Gnostics in the first century, more satisfactory than what has been stated. It has been thought, however, that there are references to them in the New Testament itself; and this is a subject that has been much discussed.

It may be, that they are referred to in what has been called the Second Epistle of Peter, and in the Epistle ascribed to Jude. But these writings were not generally acknowledged by the early Christians as the works of those apostles; and we have no reason to assign them an earlier date than the first half of the second century. There seems to me no good reason for believing that Gnostics are taken notice of in any genuine writing of an apostle; nor, I may here add, do I think it probable that any Gnostic system had been formed, or any Gnostic sect was in existence, before the end of the first century.

In the Epistles of St. Paul, the false teachers and the false doctrines that he refers to were for the most part evidently of Jewish origin. Nor do I perceive in them an allusion to any peculiar doctrine of the Gnostics. When we keep in mind what those peculiar doctrines were, — the introduction of an Unknown God; the ascribing of the creation, and of the origin of the Jewish religion, to an imperfect being or beings; the representing of Christ as a manifestation of the Unknown God, or a messenger from him, who merely used Jesus as an organ for his communications, or had only the unsubstantial semblance of a human body; and the speculations of the theosophic Gnostics, founded on hypostatizing the ideas and attributes of God, — when we recollect what were the characteristic doctrines of the Gnostics, we shall perceive, I think, that there is no reference to them in those passages in which St. Paul has been supposed by some to have had them in view. The strong, general language in which he sometimes speaks of the false teachers of his day, though often sufficiently applicable to a portion of the Gnostics, as it is to false teachers of later times, contains nothing by which those heretics are particularly designated. Had St. Paul been acquainted with any professed expounders of Christianity, who were attempting to introduce the fundamental doctrine of the Gnostics, the doctrine of an Unknown God,

different from the God of the Jews, his Epistles would have left no shadow of uncertainty respecting the fact. On this ground I think it may be determined from them, that no heretics of such a character existed in his time.

Nor does it appear probable, that the Gnostics are referred to by St. John, in the introduction to his Gospel. The passage has been explained as if the apostle alluded to a scheme, like that of Valentinus, concerning the derivation of *Æons* from the Supreme Being. But there seems no reason to suppose that such a scheme existed in the time of the apostle. Valentinus, who did not appear till somewhere about thirty years later, is represented as the author of the scheme taught by him, with which the language of St. John has been compared. The names which Valentinus gave to some of his thirty *Æons* correspond to names found in the introduction of St. John's Gospel; but it is more probable that they were suggested to him by this introduction, than that the apostle referred to them as already employed by Gnostics. The Valentinians made use of the passage in question, and accommodated it to their opinions, as they did the rest of the New Testament, as far as was in their power.

It has been especially thought, that St. John, in his first Epistle, animadverts either on the opinion existing in the second century among the theosophic Gnostics, that the man Jesus was to be distinguished from the *Æon* Christ, as a distinct agent,—which was connected with the doctrine, that Jesus had not a proper human body of flesh and blood; or on the opinion of the Docetæ, that the apparent body of Jesus was a mere phantom. He has been supposed to do so in the passage in which he says, “Every spirit [that is, every teacher] professing that Jesus is the Messiah [or Christ] *come in the flesh* is from God; and every spirit which professes not Jesus is not from God.”\* But it seems to me

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1 John iv. 2, 3. I omit, with Griesbach and other critics, the words in

most probable, that the apostle merely had in view individuals who denied that Jesus was the Messiah, and objected that the Messiah would not have come, as Jesus had done, to lead a life of hardship, and die a cruel and ignominious death; that he would not have "come in the flesh," that is, exposed to all the accidents and sufferings of humanity. Perhaps, however, by the Messiah's "coming in the flesh," St. John meant nothing more than that he had "appeared in the world," that he had "appeared among men." That the words were not essential to the main idea which he wished to express is evident from his omitting them in a corresponding passage, where he likewise refers to the false teachers to whom Christians were exposed, and where he simply describes them as "denying that Jesus is the Messiah."† In this latter passage, if in either, one might suppose him to have had Christian heretics in view; for he says that those of whom he speaks had separated themselves from the body of Christians:‡ but it is clear that he did not here refer to individuals as holding any Gnostic doctrine, but to proper apostates and unbelievers.

It may appear, therefore, that little or nothing can be inferred from any authentic source to prove the existence of Gnostic systems or sects during the first century.§ The

the last clause, answering to those italicized in what follows: "And every spirit which professes not *that Jesus has come in the flesh* is not from God."

† 1 John ii. 22.

‡ "They have gone out from us." — Ibid. ii. 19.

§ In treating of the heretics of the first century, I, of course, make no use of the pretended Epistles of Ignatius, of which I shall speak in sect. vi. of Note C, pp. 560–566. — Jerome (*Advers. Luciferianos*, Opp. iv. pars. ii. col. 304), in a declamatory passage, full, as I conceive, of misstatements, asserts that, "while the apostles were still living, while the blood of Christ was still recent in Judæa, it was maintained that the body of Christ was a phantom." But the authority of such a writer, at the end of the fourth century, is of no weight. Gibbon, however, twice imitates the passage of Jerome, and repeats his assertion. (*History of the Roman Empire*, chaps. xxi. and xlvii.)

accounts of supposed Gnostics given by Irenæus and others will not bear the test of examination, as we have seen in the case of Cerinthus; or they relate, as in the case of Simon Magus and Menander, not to Christian heretics, but to anti-christian impostors. But we are now about to quit the uncertain ground over which we have hitherto made our way, and enter on a somewhat more open road. In the earlier part of the second century, light breaks in upon us, and individuals and systems distinctly appear. We likewise find evidence to confirm the conclusion to which we have arrived, that the Gnostics did not before this time make their appearance.

There is no dispute that the leading sects of the Gnostics—that is to say, the Valentinians and the Marcionites, with whom the Basilidians may perhaps be classed—had their origin after the close of the first century.

“Subsequently to the teaching of the apostles,” says Clement of Alexandria, “about the reign of Adrian [A.D. 117–138], appeared those who devised heretical opinions, and they continued to live till that of the elder Antoninus [A.D. 138–161]. Of this number was Basilides, though, as his followers boast, he claimed Glaucias, the interpreter of Peter, for his teacher; as it is likewise reported, that Valentinus was a hearer of Theodas, who was familiar with Paul. As for Marcion, who was their contemporary, he continued to remain as an old man with his juniors.”\*

The account of Clement respecting Valentinus and Marcion corresponds with what is said by Irenæus, who states that Valentinus “came to Rome while Hyginus was bishop, flourished during the time of Pius, and remained till that of Anicetus. Marcion was at his height under Anicetus.”† The particular dates assigned to these three bishops of Rome are so various and uncertain as to make it not worth while

\* Stromat., vii. § 17, pp. 898, 899.

† Cont. Hæres., lib. iii. c. 4, § 3, pp. 178, 179.



to give them; but the first died some time before, and the last survived, the middle of the second century. Justin Martyr, who wrote his first Apology about the year 150, twice speaks in it of Marcion as then living;\* and Tertullian refers both Marcion and Valentinus to the times of Antoninus Pius.†

The Valentinians, Marcionites, and Basilidians are all mentioned in the remaining works of Justin Martyr. In his Dialogue with Trypho, he says, that the existence of men who, though Christians in profession, teach not the doctrines of Christ, but those of the spirits of delusion, serves to confirm the faith of the true believer, because it is a fulfilment of the prophecies of Christ. He had declared that false teachers should come in his name, having the skins of sheep, but being ravening wolves within. "And accordingly," says Justin, "there are and have been many coming in the name of Jesus, who have taught men to say and do impious and blasphemous things."—"Some in one way, and some in another, teach men to blaspheme the Maker of all, and the Messiah who was prophesied as coming from him, and the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." In these words, Justin refers to the fundamental doctrines of the Gnostics, that the maker of the material universe, or the chief of those by whom it was made, was not the Supreme God, but a being imperfect in power, wisdom, and goodness; that the same being was the god of the Jews; and that the expected Jewish Messiah, who had been foretold as coming from him, had been superseded by another, an unexpected messenger of a far higher character and office, coming from and revealing the true God. Some of the heretics mentioned, Justin proceeds to say,

\* I. Apolog., p. 43, p. 85.

† Advers. Marcion., lib. i. c. 19, p. 374. De Præscript. Hæret., c. 30 p. 212

"are called Marcionites, some Valentinians, some Basilidians, some Saturnilians, and others by different names, after their leaders." \* The Saturnilians or followers of Saturnilus, or Saturninus, as he is more commonly called, were an obscure sect which requires no particular notice.

The Marcionites are twice mentioned by Justin elsewhere. "Marcion of Pontus," he says, "under the impulse of evil demons, is even now teaching men to deny the God who is the Maker of all things celestial and terrestrial, and the Messiah his Son, who was foretold by the prophets, and proclaiming a certain other God beside the Maker of all things, and likewise another Son." †

Beside these notices of them in his remaining works, Justin composed, as he himself informs us, ‡ a treatise against all heresies; but this is not extant. Irenæus § quotes a book of Justin against Marcion, which was perhaps a portion of the work just mentioned, but which, whether it were so or not, is also lost.

Such being the case, the most important authority respecting the history of the early heretics, except the Marcionites, is Justin's contemporary, Irenæus. The large work of Irenæus which remains to us (principally in an ancient Latin translation) is occupied by the statement and refutation of their opinions. Though he gives accounts of other heresies, he writes with particular reference to the Valentinians, whom he regarded as the chief of the Gnostic sects. || "The doctrine of the Valentinians," says Irenæus, "is a summary of all heresies, and he who confutes those heretics confutes every other." ¶ He explains at length their theory as it

\* Dial cum Tryph, pp. 207-209.

† I Apolog, p. 85; vide etiam p. 43.

‡ I. Apolog., p. 44.

§ Cont. Hæres., lib. iv. c. 6, § 2, p. 233.

|| Ibid, lib. i. Præf. § 2, p. 3.

¶ Ibid, lib. iv. Præf § 2, p. 227: conf. lib. ii. c. 31, § 1, p. 163.

existed in his day, not indeed in its original form, as it proceeded from Valentinus, but as it had been subsequently modified by one of his most distinguished followers, Ptolemy. Afterwards, he gives an account of the original scheme of Valentinus, which does not appear to have differed in any essential particular from the modification of it by Ptolemy.\*

The statements of Irenæus respecting the Valentinians are confirmed by Tertullian in a work written expressly against that sect,† which so closely resembles the account of Irenæus as to leave little doubt that he took this for the basis of his own; though there is no reason for supposing, that his acquaintance with the doctrines of the Valentinians was derived only from the writings of that earlier father. Many notices of them are found in his other works, and in those of Clement of Alexandria, and of Origen. These notices confirm generally what is stated by Irenæus, and add something to the information which he affords.

We have also some remains of the writings of Valentinians themselves. The most important of them is a letter by Ptolemy, preserved by Epiphanius.‡ It is addressed to a lady, whose name was Flora, and contains an account of his opinions concerning the origin and character of the Jewish Law, and the god of the Jews, whom he identifies with the Maker of the world. However erroneous may be the opinions of Ptolemy, he expresses himself with good sense, and his manner is unobjectionable.

Epiphanius has likewise given an extract from the work of some one, whom he calls a Valentinian, but whose name he does not mention.§ It relates to the derivation of the Æons. The writer commences by professing his intention to

Lib i. c. 11, p. 52, seqq.

† *Adversus Valentinianos.*

‡ *Hæres.*, xxxiii. p. 216, seqq. The letter of Ptolemy is also printed in the Appendix to Massuet's edition of Irenæus.

§ *Hæres.*, xxxi. p. 168, seqq. *Apud Irenæi Opp.*, ed. Massuet, p. 855.

speak of "things nameless and supercelestial, which cannot be fully comprehended by principalities nor powers, nor those in subjection, nor by any one, but are manifest only to the thought of the Unchangeable;" and he proceeds in a manner conformable to this annunciation, so discouraging to a common reader. It is a very offensive specimen of the extravagances of some of the Gnostics. Epiphanius, as has been mentioned, ascribes it to a Valentinian. But, from its want of correspondence with the preceding accounts of the different systems held by Valentinus and his followers, it affords additional proof, either that the speculations of the Valentinians were continually changing their form, or that the names of ancient sects were very loosely applied in the time of Epiphanius.\*

There is also a work consisting, in great part, of extracts from one or more writers of the school of Valentinus.† But it is of less value than might be expected. It presents no connected system. Its language is very obscure; its text appears to have been but ill preserved; and there is a difficulty in distinguishing between the words and sentiments of the compiler and those which he quotes.

Beside the writings mentioned, Origen has preserved various passages from a commentary on the Gospel of John by Heracleon, a distinguished Valentinian of the second century; and Clement of Alexandria affords us another extract

\* In the passage quoted by Epiphanius, there are allusions of the grossest kind in reference to the production of the *Æons*. Such language, as Clement of Alexandria informs us, was used, in his time, by the followers of an individual, named Prodicus; but Clement, in speaking of them, exculpates the Valentinians from the imputation of such impurity.—*Stromat.*, iii. § 4, pp 524, 525.

† The title of this compilation is, "From the Writings of Theodotus. The Heads of the Oriental Doctrine, so called, as it existed in the Age of Valentinus." I shall quote the work under the name of "*Doctrina Orientalis*." It may be found in Potter's edition of the Works of Clement of Alexandria, p. 966, seqq.

from Heracleon, and a few extracts from the works of Valentinus himself.\*

Of the opinions of Marcion and his followers, our information is nearly or quite as ample. Irenæus, indeed, gives but a short account of them; it having been his intention, as he states, to refute that heretic in a separate treatise. This work, if he ever accomplished it, which is not probable, is now lost. The reasons which he assigns for discussing Marcion's system by itself deserve attention. He says, "*Because Marcion alone has dared openly to mutilate the Scriptures, and has gone beyond all others in shamelessly disparaging the character of God [the Creator], I shall oppose him by himself, confuting him from his own writings; and, with the help of God, effect his overthrow by means of those discourses of our Lord and his apostle [St. Paul] which are respected by him, and which he himself uses.*" † In speaking of Marcion's disparaging the character of God, Irenæus refers, as will be readily understood, not to Marcion's opinions concerning the Supreme Being, but to his opinions concerning that inferior agent whom the Gnostics conceived of as the Maker of the world. In the view of Irenæus, the Supreme God and the Maker of the world being the same, what was said unworthily of the latter he regarded as virtually said of the former.

The information respecting the Marcionites which we miss in Irenæus is abundantly supplied by Tertullian in his long and elaborate treatise, "*Against Marcion;*" a composition that so clearly exhibits the workings of a powerful mind, in which striking thoughts are presented with such condensation of language, expressions stand out in such bold relief,

These fragments of Heracleon and Valentinus are collected in the Appendix to Massuet's edition of Irenæus.

† Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 27, § 4, p. 106.

and arguments are sometimes so rapidly developed, as, notwithstanding a difficult style and a corrupt text, to fix the attention, and create an interest in the exposition and confutation of obsolete errors. Of Marcion and his followers we find mention, likewise, in other works of Tertullian, and in those of Clement and of Origen; and, in addition to what is given by Tertullian, Epiphanius affords some further information, which there is no particular reason to distrust, respecting Marcion's mutilations of the New Testament.

As regards other Gnostic sects existing in the second century, our principal information must be derived from the earlier fathers who have been mentioned, — Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement, and Origen.\* For the most part, the later fathers who have written concerning the Gnostics either copy their predecessors, or present us, instead of facts, with misconceptions, fictions, and calumnies; or perhaps report, under some ancient name, the doctrines and practices ascribed to supposed individuals of their own day, who, if such individuals really existed, had little in common with those by whom the name given to them had been formerly borne. If we would have any just conceptions of Christian antiquity, we must never lose sight of the distinction between the *earlier* and the *later* fathers, — between those who wrote before, and those who wrote after, the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire. It has been greatly neglected. It admits of particular exceptions and much qualification in favor of individuals. But, generally, a wide separation is to be made between the patient or stern sufferers of the ages of persecu-

\* I have already had occasion to mention the addition by another writer to Tertullian's work, *De Præscriptione* (See p. 196, note †) The date of its composition is uncertain. It is a brief summary of some of the common accounts of the heretical sects, evidently made with little investigation, and, consequently, of little value. An undue weight is sometimes given it, by its being quoted as if written by Tertullian.

tion, whose religion was the principle of their lives, and the courtier bishops who frequented the imperial palace, the factious and virulent party-leaders who rent the Church with their dissensions, and the fiery ascetics to whom monastic superstition gave birth.

Of the later writers concerning the Gnostics, the first to be mentioned is Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis in Cyprus during the latter part of the fourth century, and the author of a large work "Against Eighty Heresies." He was a zealot of a mean mind and persecuting temper. He had a childish love of multiplying the sects and names of the heretics, and was unsparing in loading them with opprobrium. He was, undoubtedly, credulous, and has sometimes told in good faith what cannot be believed; but the stories that he relates on his own authority show that his want of truth was equal to his want of good sense. In some of those charges which he is ever ready to bring against the heretics, he discovers a mind familiar with the most loathsome conceptions of impurity. His work, at the same time, is full of blunders and contradictory statements, arising from ignorance, negligence, and want of capacity. Still something may be learnt from it; and the testimony of Epiphanius may deserve attention, when his reports are intrinsically probable, when they coincide with and complete the information of some more credible writer, when they are in opposition to his own prejudices, or in cases in which there was no temptation to falsehood and small liability to mistake. Sometimes, also, we may form a probable conjecture, by considering on what facts a particular misrepresentation, coming from a writer of such a character, was likely to be founded. Even where his accounts in their gross state are false, it has been found possible, by combining them with the information received from others, by subjecting them to an analysis and applying the proper tests, to detect and separate a portion of truth.

We pass to a work on heresies, entitled "A Dialogue concerning the Right Faith in God,"—*De Rectâ in Deum Fide*.\* This has sometimes been regarded as a work of Origen: but it is the production of a later writer, who lived after the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire, and appears to have borne, like Origen, the name of Adamantius; it being now ascribed in its title to an author of that name. In determining the opinions of the ancient heretics, too much credit has been given to this work, which deserves little or no consideration when its accounts are inconsistent with those of the earlier fathers. It is the production of one who was very imperfectly acquainted with the real doctrines of the Gnostics, if he meant to represent them correctly, and who has, in consequence, improperly assigned to different sects opinions which it was his purpose to confute.

In the latter half of the fourth century, a work on heresies was composed by Philaster, Bishop of Brescia in Italy, a writer of the lowest order. It is full of almost pitiable weaknesses. His reputation, for some reputation he had, serves to show how low the human intellect had sunk in his age within the limits of the Western Empire.

His work is, however, quoted as a main source of information on the subject by Augustin, who has left a name indelibly impressed on the history of the world, and who, in the first half of the fifth century, likewise wrote on heretics. But his "Catalogue of Heresies," as it is entitled, is merely a synopsis, apparently a hasty production, composed without any critical inquiry. It is of no authority, containing little which is not taken from Epiphanius or Philaster; and it even appears that he was ignorant of the existence of the whole work of Epiphanius. His description of the book

\* It is published in the first volume of De la Rue's edition of Origen.



which he used is applicable only to an epitome of it.\* He probably consulted some manuscript which contained in a Latin translation (for he was ignorant of Greek) only the synopses that Epiphanius has prefixed to the different divisions of his work. It is evident that he did not write from any personal knowledge of Gnostics as existing in his time.

In the fifth century, likewise, Theodoret, who holds a high rank among the later Greek fathers, composed a treatise on the heretics, in five books.† The first three books relate to those whom he calls ancient heretics, — the Gnostics and the Manichæans; the Ebionites, and those who believed with them that Christ was only a man; and some others, whom he ranks with neither class. Concerning these ancient heretics, he professes to have compiled his information from older writers, — Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius the ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius of Emesa, Adamantius (the author of the Dialogue *De Rectâ Fide*), and others of less note, whose works are lost. It is perhaps a proof of his good sense, that he does not name Epiphanius as an authority. He speaks of the ancient sects, preceding the time of Arius, as being for the most part extinct; and apprehends that he may be blamed by some for having “brought them again from the darkness of oblivion into the light of memory.”‡ He says, that God, permitting the evil seed to be sown, had turned the greater part of the tares into wheat, so that most places were free from the Gnostic heresies; the remaining disciples of Valentinus and of Marcion, and likewise the Manichæans, being few, easily numbered, and thinly scattered in certain cities.§ In various

Opp. (Basil., 1569) vi col 10.

† *Hæreticarum Fabularum Compendium*, in the fourth volume of Sirmond's edition of his works.

‡ *Epist. Præfat ad Sporacium*, pp. 188, 189.

§ *Hæret Fab.*, lib. ii. *Præfat.* p. 218.

places he expresses himself to the same effect. The ancient heresies, he informs us, had passed out of notice; they had either been "rooted up, or remained, like half-withered trees, in a few cities and villages."

\* Lib. iii. Præfat. p. 226, lib. iii. (*ad finem*), p. 132; lib. iv. Præfat. p. 232. Certain assertions, however, in the Epistles of Theodoret may appear, at first sight, irreconcilable with those quoted above. In one place (Epist. lxxxi, Opp. iii. pars. ii. p. 954), he says he had converted the inhabitants of eight villages, together with those of the neighboring country, from the heresy of Marcion, and brought them over willingly to the truth; in another (Epist. cxlii. pp. 986, 987), that, during the twenty-six years he had been bishop, he had "delivered more than a thousand souls from the disease of Marcion,"—adding, that all heresy was thoroughly extirpated from the churches under his charge; and in a third (Epist. cxlv. p. 1026), that, by his controversial writings against them, he had made orthodox Christians of more than a myriad of Marcionites,—which, of course, may be considered as an extravagant rhetorical amplification. It is an obvious remark, that a sect must have been already falling to pieces, from which converts were made so readily. It is probable, likewise, that Theodoret, who, in these Epistles, is defending himself against his enemies, and enumerating his services and labors as bishop, not only exaggerated in the estimate of numbers, but applied the name Marcionite very loosely. The remains of the Marcionites, however, from the more simple doctrines and stricter morality and discipline of the sect, were likely to survive those of the other Gnostics.

Another passage of one of Theodoret's Epistles has been referred to (Priestley's History of Early Opinions, vol. i. p. 118), as proving that the Gnostics were reviving in his time. But the passage has been misunderstood. Theodoret says, "Those who, at the present time, have renewed the heresy of Marcion and Valentinus and Manes, and the other Doctæ, being angry with me for publicly exposing their heresy, have endeavored to deceive the emperor" (Epist. lxxxii. p. 955). He is here speaking, not of any proper Gnostics, but of his enemies, the Eutychians, at that time the dominant party in the Church. With reference to their opinions respecting the person of Christ, he elsewhere describes them as endeavoring to plant anew the heresy of Valentinus and Bardesanes, which had been rooted out (Epist. cxlv. p. 1024). In his work on Heresies, likewise, he says, that Satan, by means of "the miserable Eutyches, had caused the heresy of Valentinus, withered long ago, to flower again" (Hæret. Fab., lib. iv. n. 13; Opp. iv. 246).

These passages illustrate the loose manner in which the names of ancient Gnostic sects were applied in later times, and serve to show that they were sometimes used as mere terms of reproach toward those who were regarded

Beside the writers who have been mentioned, and of whose respective authority it has been my purpose to give some estimate, there are notices of the Gnostics, though not of much value, in Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History; and some information concerning them is scattered, here and there, in the writings of other later fathers. But, in general, it is little to be relied on.

In addition, likewise, to what is said of them by Christian writers, we find some notices of them in the works of the heathen opponents of Christianity. Celsus brought forward, as objections to Christianity, their real or pretended doctrines, in his work which was answered by Origen. In one place, as quoted by Origen,\* he says, "Let no one think me ignorant, that some of the Christians agree that their God is the same with the God of the Jews, while others maintain one opposite to him, from whom they say that the Son came."

In the third century, Gnostics, and individuals holding some of the fundamental doctrines of the Gnostics, were made a subject of remark by the later Platonists, Plotinus and Porphyry. After the death of Plotinus, Porphyry reduced into some form, and gave some finish to, the crude mass of his writings, which he had left unpublished, and prefixed to them an account of his life. In this account, he says that there were in the time of Plotinus many Christians, and other sectaries, drawn away from the ancient philosophy, the followers of Adelphius and Acylinus, two individuals of whom we have no further knowledge. These sectaries used the works of writers whose names Porphyry gives, but of whom nothing now remains except their names. They likewise, he states, had books entitled Revelations, ascribed to Zoroaster †

as coinciding with the Gnostics in some one of their opinions. A similar use of opprobrious appellations has at all times been common.

\* Cont. Cels., lib. v. n. 61; Opp. i. 624.

† Many spurious works were about this time ascribed to Zoroaster. Of

and others. "Being," he says, "deceived themselves, they deceived many, pretending that Plato had not penetrated to the depth of the essence of *intelligibles*." Plotinus, he informs us, had written a treatise concerning them, which he, in his arrangement of Plotinus's works, had entitled "Against the Gnostics."\* But in the manuscripts of this treatise there is found another title, more precise and appropriate, which describes it as "Against those who affirm that the World and its Maker are Bad." Porphyry says, that he had himself proved at length, that the work ascribed to Zoroaster was spurious, having been lately fabricated by those sectaries.† It may be remarked, that Clement of Alexandria says, that the followers of Prodicus, a most immoral sect of pseudo-Gnostics, boasted of possessing the secret writings of Zoroaster.‡

Plotinus, in the tract referred to, represents those against whom he is writing as believing that the sensible universe was badly formed by an imperfect and erring power, sinking downward, as it were, with failing wings. § He himself taught that it was eternal, without beginning or end. He refers particularly to doctrines concerning its formation, coincident with those ascribed to the Valentinians by Irenæus, || which will be hereafter explained. In reference to the doctrine of the Gnostics concerning *Æons*, or hypostatized attributes and ideas, emanent from God, and belonging to the totality of his nature, he objects, that, under pretence of investigating more accurately, they so divided the *intelligible* nature into this multitude of beings as to make it like the sensible. The

these, his "Oracles" alone are, in part, extant. They may be found at the end of Stanley's "History of Philosophy." But they are not the work referred to above. They contain nothing peculiarly Gnostic, but are conformed to the doctrine of the later Platonists, and are quoted with admiration by Proclus, and other writers of that school.

\* Now forming the ninth book of the second Ennead of his Works, p. 199, seqq

† Plotini Vita, *ubi sup.*

‡ Stromat., i. § 15, p. 357.

§ Cont. Gnost., § 4, p. 202, *passim*.

|| Ibid., § 4, p. 202, § 10, p. 209.

division, he says, should be as small as possible, into not more than three\* (the trinity of the later Platonists). He dwells upon their blaming the constitution and government of the world.† He speaks of their hating the body.‡ He says that they used magical arts.§ And he represents their doctrines as strongly tending to produce bad morals. ||

In all this, so far as it goes, there is sufficient agreement with the representations of the fathers concerning the Gnostics. But there is no evidence that Plotinus was writing against Christian heretics. Nothing is said by him concerning that essential part of the scheme of the Gnostics which was founded on Christianity. The doctrines attacked by him might have been, and probably were, all held by heathen speculatists; and to such there seems little doubt that he primarily referred. He nowhere uses the name of Gnostic or Christian in this discussion. He nowhere, throughout his writings, makes any direct and open attack on Christians, or expressly recognizes their existence. Thus leaving the great body of Christians unassailed, it is not likely that he would have entered into a labored controversy with heretics, disavowed by them, though claiming the Christian name, and not recognized as proper heathen philosophers, who consequently could hardly have been thought by him worthy of so much attention. There are doubtless in his tract "Against the Gnostics" positions asserted contrary to Christian truth, or to what was then the common belief of Christians; as, for instance, he in one place expressly defends polytheism, ¶ and in another argues against ascribing diseases to the agency of demons:\*\* but this does not prove that the writer had Christian heretics particularly in view. In supporting his own

Ibid., § 6, p. 204.

† Ibid., § 17, p. 215, seqq.

‡ Ibid., § 15, p. 213.

\*\* Ibid., § 14, pp. 212, 213.

† Ibid., § 12, p. 211; § 15, p. 213, *passim*.

§ Ibid., § 14, p. 212.

¶ Ibid., § 9, p. 207.

philosophy, he could not but advance what was opposite to Christianity, and to the opinions of Christians. He speaks of those holding the doctrines against which he particularly wrote, as being, some of them, friends of his own, who had adopted those opinions before they became his friends.\* If any Christian heretics had become friends of Plotinus, — a circumstance very improbable, — we can hardly doubt, that in controverting their peculiar doctrines, bearing throughout a relation to Christianity, he would have distinctly brought into view the fact of their being Christians. Porphyry says, that those against whom his master wrote were followers of Adelpheus and Acylinus. Neither of these names, nor any that may plausibly be substituted for the latter of the two if it be an error of transcription, as has been supposed, is found anywhere in the writings of the fathers as that of the founder of a Gnostic sect. Nor is the use of any of the books, mentioned by Porphyry as current among the sectaries of whom he speaks, ascribed by the fathers to any of the Gnostics; unless the Revelations of Zoroaster should be supposed an exception to this remark, on the ground of the statement of Clement, that the secret writings of Zoroaster were used by the followers of Prodicus. But the followers of Prodicus were not, I conceive, Christians.

Thus we have seen from what writers our information concerning the history of the Gnostics is to be derived, and how their respective authority is to be estimated. If the views that have been taken are correct, it is clear that these writers are not to be adduced indiscriminately. We cannot gain a correct knowledge of the Gnostics from a modern account, in which the statements of Epiphanius, Philaster, Augustin, and Theodoret are blended, as of equal value, with those of Irenæus, Clement, Tertullian, and Origen.

\* Cont. Gnost., § 10, p. 209

From what has been said, we conclude that there are no distinct traces of the existence of Gnostic sects or systems during the first century. But, before the middle of the second century, the Gnostics became a well-recognized body, their most distinguished leaders appeared, and their opinions were formed into different systems. From the writers of this century and the next, to Origen inclusive, our principal authentic information concerning them is to be derived. At the same time, it is only with the opinions of the Gnostics of the first three centuries concerning the genuineness of the Gospels that we are concerned. Those of the Gnostics of a later period require no particular investigation, and throw no light on the subject. In the latter part of the third century, the sect of the Manichæans arose, nearly allied to that of the Gnostics, but presenting a bolder and broader theory of the universe, which cast into the shade the system of their predecessors. The names of ancient Gnostic sects, however, still remained in the fourth century, sometimes, we may believe, voluntarily assumed, and sometimes imposed as names of obloquy; but it may be doubted, whether the tenets of the sects originally denoted by those names had not, in many cases, undergone great modifications among their reputed successors. By the writers of this century, the Gnostics are, I think, generally treated of in a manner that implies rather their past existence than their actual prevalence. Their history became full of mistakes and falsehoods. From the third to the fifth century, they were probably dwindling away; and in the fifth century, in the time of Theodoret, they seem, with the exception of some remaining Marcionites, nearly to have disappeared. Indeed, according to Gregory Nazianzen, they had ceased to disturb the Church before the Arian controversy arose, in the beginning of the fourth century. Speaking of the period immediately preceding, he says,\*

\* Orat. xxiii.; Opp. i. 414, ed. Morelli.

“There was a time when we had rest from heresies; when the Simonians and Marcionites, the Valentinians, the Basilidians, and the followers of Cerdo, the Cerinthians and Carpocratians, with all their idle and monstrous doctrines, their complete division of the God of All, and opposing of the Good God to the Creator, were swallowed up in their own ABYSS, and given over to SILENCE.” In the last clause, there is a play upon words; *Bυθός*, the *Depth*, or the *Abyss*, being the name given by the Valentinians to the Supreme Being, who was represented by them as having dwelt from eternity with the *Æon*, *Silence*.\* After the quotation just made, Gregory speaks of the decline of other heresies extant in the third century; and then says, “After a short interval, a new tempest rose against the Church,” — the Arian heresy. He does not represent the old heresies as ever reviving. The passage from which I have quoted is undoubtedly rhetorical and inexact; but we can hardly infer less from it than that the Gnostic heresy was dwindling away during the fourth century. In the Code of Justinian, however, among the edicts against heretics,† the names of ancient Gnostic sects occur; but how far those to whom they were applied resembled the Gnostics of the second and third centuries, may appear, from what has been before said, to be very questionable.

Respecting the number of the Gnostics at the time when they were most numerous, we have no means of approximating to any precise computation; but many considerations show that it must have borne but a small proportion to that of the catholic Christians. The doctrines of the theosophic Gnostics were of such a nature, that they were little likely to be embraced except by men of a peculiar turn of mind, somewhat

\* The same play upon words expressive of the same fact is in Theodoret: *Hæret. Fab.*, lib. iv. *Præfat.* p. 232.

† *Lib. i. tit. 5.*



accustomed to the philosophical speculations of the age; especially as the character of that age, and the external circumstances of Christians, did not favor the affectation of mysticism, or the pride of holding novel theories, among the unlearned. Ptolemy, the Valentinian, in the beginning of his letter to Flora, before mentioned, says that "not many have a right apprehension of the Law given by Moses," — meaning, that not many adopted the Gnostic opinions concerning it. The followers of Basilides affirmed, according to Irenæus, that "few could understand their mysteries, — one only in a thousand, and two in ten thousand;" and added, "that the Jews had ceased to be, but Christians were not as yet."\* In the *Doctrina Orientalis*,† Theodotus, or some other Gnostic, referring to a division of men into three classes, made by the Valentinians, says, that "the earthy are numerous, the rational‡ [which class included common Christians] are not numerous, and the spiritual [the Gnostics] are rare."§ These statements correspond to the common representation of the theosophic Gnostics, that their peculiar doctrines were the esoteric doctrines of Christianity, which had been privately handed down to those capable of receiving them.

What has been said applies more particularly to the theosophic Gnostics. As regards the Marcionites, they were distinguished for their abstinence from worldly pleasures. Marriage was not tolerated among them. Those united by it were obliged to separate, on becoming members of their community.|| Their bold doctrines were opposed without disguise to the common belief, and to the plain language of the Gospels, and were little likely to be received except by individuals possessed of more than usual hardihood of mind. In

\* Contra Hæres., lib. i. c. 24, § 6, p. 102. † See before, p. 208 note †.

‡ Οἱ ψυχικοί. § Doctrina Orientalis, § 56, p. 983.

|| Clement. Al. Stromat., iii. § 3, p. 515, seq., § 4, p. 522, § 5, p. 529, § 6, p. 531, seqq. Tertullian. advers. Marcion., lib. i. c. 29, pp. 380, 381; lib. iv. c. 11, p. 422, c. 23, p. 438, c. 34, p. 450; lib. v. c. 7, p. 469, c. 15, p. 480.

the practice of their self-denying virtues or extravagances, they were not encouraged, as others have been, by popular admiration. On the contrary, they were objects of odium. They had no support but from among themselves. They were rejected by the catholic Christians as heretics, and by the Heathens they were persecuted as Christians. They were very conscientious, but very erroneous believers. Such a sect we must suppose to have been small, compared with the catholic Christians; though there is some ground for believing, that its number was nearly or quite equal to that of all the other Gnostics.

The fact that the different sects of Gnostics insensibly melted away at so early a period, and the further fact that their doctrines had so little influence upon the belief of subsequent Christians, likewise afford proof that they formed only a small part of the whole Christian body. The same inference may be drawn from the manner in which they were treated by the early fathers, who manifest no alarm at their growth, nor fear of their prevalence, but who write concerning them in a tone of undoubting superiority. It may be further observed, that the early fathers, in the passages in which they speak of the multitude of Christians who had spread through the world, neither except nor include the Gnostics, but appear not to have had them in mind, though they certainly did not consider them as belonging to the Church, or, in other words, to the great body of proper Christians. In the passages, likewise, in which they speak of the unity of faith in the Church, their modes of expression imply that the Gnostics bore but a small proportion to the catholic Christians.

“The Church,” says Irenæus, “though scattered over the whole world, carefully preserves the faith derived from the apostles and their disciples, as if it were but a single family in one house. . . . It speaks as with one mouth. For, various as are the languages of the world, the essential doctrine is one and the same. No

different belief has been held or taught by the churches founded in Germany, nor by those in Spain, nor in Gaul, nor in the East, nor in Egypt, nor in Libya, nor by those founded in the middle of the world [Judæa]. But as the sun, the creature of God, in every part of the world is one and the same; so the preaching of the truth shines everywhere, and enlightens all who are desirous of knowing the truth." \*

Language such as this could hardly have been used, if there had been a large body of professed Christians who rejected the doctrines of the Church.

Here, then, we conclude what may be called the external history of the Gnostics. In the next chapter, we shall speak of their moral characteristics, in connection with their imperfect knowledge of Christianity.

\* Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 10, § 2, p. 49: conf. § 1, p. 48.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ON THE MORALS OF THE Gnostics, AND THEIR IMPERFECT CONCEPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

WHEN, in the second century, after an interval of obscurity following the times of the apostles, the catholic Christians appear distinctly in view, we find them distinguished, as a body, by their abhorrence of the vices of the heathen world, by a high and stern morality, by the strictness of the discipline which respective churches exercised over their members, by a general tendency to the virtues of the ascetic and the martyr, and by Christian faith, the conviction of the reality of the unseen and the future controlling the sense of present pleasures and sufferings. In this character the Marcionites appear to have shared; but what was the state of morals among the theosophic Gnostics is a question less easy to decide.

Clement of Alexandria divides the heretics into two classes. "They either teach men," he says, "to lead a loose life, or, with overstrained severity, they preach continence through impiety and enmity;"\* — that is, as Clement meant, enmity towards the Creator. In his view, the latter class included the Marcionites, and some ascetics among the other Gnostics, to all of whom the name of *Encratites* † was given.

\* Stromat., iii. § 5, p. 529, seqq. · conf §§ 3, 4, p. 515, seqq.

† From the Greek *ἐγκρατής*, "practising self-command," "continent."

They taught that it was not right to marry, and bring children into this imperfect and unhappy world; and, regarding the body as evil, considered the pleasures of the senses as sinful. In consequence, Clement ascribes their principles to enmity to the Creator. "Through opposition to the Creator," he says, "Marcion rejected the use of the things of this world."\* A similar account of the self-denial of the Encratites, and of its cause, is given by Irenæus.† To the strict morals of the Marcionites, Tertullian bears indirect but decisive testimony. He is speaking of their doctrine, that while the Creator was *just*, and inflicted punishment, the Supreme God, their God, was *good*, and not to be feared. "Come now," he says, with his usual force of expression, though the sentiment is incorrect, "you who do not fear God, because he is good, why do you not indulge in every lust, the chief gratification of life, as far as I know, to all who do not fear God? Why not frequent the customary pleasures of the raging circus, the savage arena, and the lascivious theatre? Why, in times of persecution, do you not at once take the proffered censer,‡ and save your life by denying your faith? 'Far be it from me!' you say; 'far be it from me!' You fear to offend, then, and thus you prove that you fear Him who forbids the offence."§ Conformably to this, Origen speaks of the good morals of some of the heretics, as one means of drawing men over to their doctrines; and he states hypothetically the case of such a heretic, "either a Marcionite," he says, "or a disciple of Valentinus, or of any other sect."||

But generally, the accounts of the morals of the theosophic Gnostics are very unfavorable. According to the statements

\* Stromat., iii. § 4, p. 522.

† Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 28, § 1, pp. 106, 107.

‡ The censer was proffered, that the person accused of Christianity might offer incense to some idol, and thus refute the charge.

§ Advers. Marcion., lib. i. c. 27, pp. 379, 380.

|| Homil. in Ezechiel, vii. § 8; Opp. iii. 382.

of Irenæus, the Valentinians, affirming themselves to be distinguished from others by their spiritual nature, which made a part of their original conformation, maintained that it was impossible they should not be saved, whatever they might do. They regarded the spiritual principle identified with them as incapable of pollution; and compared themselves to gold, which receives no injury from defilement. Hence the perfect among them, he affirms, practised without fear all that is forbidden. They ate idol-sacrifices, and celebrated the heathen festivals; some of them did not abstain from the shows of gladiators and the fights with wild beasts, "spectacles," says Irenæus, with the new feeling of a Christian concerning them, "hated by God and men;" and others were grossly licentious in their lives, seducing and corrupting women, by teaching them their principles.\*

The erroneous doctrine, mentioned by Irenæus, concerning their spiritual nature, appears, in its essential features, to have been common to the Valentinians generally, and also to the other theosophic Gnostics,† but not the moral offences with which he charges them as its consequence, as may appear in part from the limiting words, "some" and "others," and "the perfect among them" (used perhaps ironically), which he introduces into his account. Of the Valentinians and other theosophic Gnostics, it is to be recollected, on the one hand, that they were Christians, and, on the other, that they were not rational Christians. As a sect, they entertained very erroneous views of our religion, and probably many of them had been very ill informed concerning it. Repelled, as they were, from the great body of believers, there is no reason to doubt that there were among them those whom the power of Christianity was not sufficient to

\* *Cont. Hæres*, lib. i. c. 6, p. 28, seqq.

† In addition to what has been quoted from Irenæus, see *Clement. Al. Stromat.*, ii. § 3, pp. 433, 434, § 20, p. 489; v. § 1, p. 645.

withdraw from the evil influences of the pagan world, by which they were surrounded; whose ties to it were far from being altogether broken; who still remained entangled among its corruptions. With some softening, perhaps, of such charges as those of Irenæus, we have no ground for questioning their applicability to a portion of the theosophic Gnostics; but, at the same time, we have evidence, to which we will now advert, that they were true only of a portion.

Clement of Alexandria, discoursing on self-restraint, quotes, almost as an authority, a passage from Valentinus. It begins thus: "There is One who is good, who has openly manifested himself through his Son; and through him alone can the heart be made pure, every evil spirit being driven out of it." Valentinus compares the heart polluted by the indwelling of evil spirits to a caravansary injured and defiled by the strangers who lodge in it. "But," he says, "when the only good Father takes charge of it, it is made holy and enlightened; and thus he who has such a heart is *blessed, for he shall see God.*"\* Tatian, who was distinguished for his asceticism, was, says Clement, of the school of Valentinus.† Heracleon, a distinguished Valentinian, is quoted by Clement, as teaching that the profession of faith required by Christ of his followers is not that made in words only, but that "made by works answering to faith in him."‡ And Ptolemy, who remodelled the system of his master, taught that the fasting enjoined by our Saviour was not bodily abstinence, but abstinence from all sin.§

Basilides and his followers formed another branch of the

Stromat., ii § 20, pp 488, 489 Valentinus, it will be perceived, alludes to the words of Christ, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." The whole passage, as Clement remarks, does not seem easily reconcilable with the doctrine, that the spiritual are so by natural constitution, and are, in consequence, assured of salvation.

† Ibid., iii. § 13, p. 553.

‡ Ibid., iv. § 9, p. 595.

§ Epist. ad Floram; apud Irenæi Opp. p. 360.

theosophic Gnostics, nearly allied to the Valentinians; and Irenæus brings similar charges of immorality against them.\* But Clement begins the third book of his *Stromata* with quoting two passages, one from Basilides, and the other from his son Isidore; and then proceeds to say, "I have adduced these words for the reproof of those Basilidians who live not as they ought, as if through their perfectness they were free to sin, or as if, though they should now sin, they would be saved by nature through their innate election; for the founders of their doctrines give them no license so to act."† Thus Clement, writing with less prejudice, corrects, and at the same time confirms in part, the accounts of Irenæus.

But against certain sects and individuals Clement himself brings the gravest charges of immorality, so deep-seated as thoroughly to corrupt their principles. "I have fallen in with a sect," he says, "whose leader affirmed that we must fight with pleasure by the use of pleasure; this genuine Gnostic, for he called himself a Gnostic, thus deserting to pleasure under the pretence of warring against it."‡ He then mentions others, who perverted (one can hardly think seriously) the ascetic maxim, "that the body must be abused," and employed it to justify themselves in the most licentious indulgences.§ In another place, he speaks of an individual named Prodicus, and of his followers. "They affirm," says Clement, "that by nature they are sons of the First God; that, using the privilege of their birth and freedom, they live as they choose, and that they choose to live in pleasure. They think that they are under no control, as *lords of the Sabbath*, and born superior to every other race, royal children; for a king, they say, is circumscribed by no law."||

\* Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 24, § 5, p. 102, c. 28, § 2, p. 107.

† *Stromat.*, iii. § 1, p. 510.

‡ *Ibid.*, ii. § 20, p. 490.

§ *Ibid.*, ii. § 20, pp. 490, 491: conf. iii. § 4, pp. 522, 523.

|| *Ibid.*, iii. § 4, p. 525.



They taught that there was no obligation to pray.\* Speaking of sectaries of a like kind, Clement also says, that there were "some who called intercourse with common women a mystical communion; doing outrage to the name." — "They consecrate such licentiousness," he says, "and think that it conducts them to the kingdom of God."† The charge of teaching that gross licentiousness was a necessary means of liberating the soul from its entanglement in matter, and consequently was a religious duty, is likewise brought by Irenæus against the Carpocratians, a sect to be hereafter mentioned.

Clement also speaks of individuals, called *Antitacta* (Opponents), whom he describes as maintaining that "the God of all is our Father by nature, and that all which he made is good; but that one of those produced by him sowed tares, and gave birth to evils, in which he involved us, opposing us to the Father; whence, to avenge the Father, we, they say, oppose him, doing contrary to his will. Since, therefore, he said, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' we commit adultery to break his command."‡ The giver of the law, it seems, was, in their view, the Devil. Ptolemy, the Valentinian, likewise speaks of some who referred the origin of the Jewish Law to the Devil; but he says that they also ascribed to him the creation of the world;§ which does not appear to have been true of the persons mentioned by Clement. These, it would seem, pretended to be in some sort Christians; for Clement, in reasoning against them, implies that they affirmed, that "the Saviour only was to be obeyed;"|| the comparison evidently being between him and the giver of the Law.

There is a passage of the later Platonist, Porphyry, de-

\* Stromat., vii. § 7, p. 854.

† Ibid., iii. § 4, pp. 526, 527.

‡ Stromat., iii. § 4 p. 527.

† Ibid., iii. § 4, pp. 523, 524.

§ Epist. ad Floram, pp. 357, 358

scriptive of individuals resembling some of those spoken of by Clement, in their pretensions and in their licentious principles. It is in his work in which he defends the Pythagorean doctrine of abstinence from animal food. "The opinion," he says, "that one yielding to the affections of the senses can employ his powers about the objects of intellect, has been the ruin of many of the barbarians;" by which term he means those whose religion and philosophy were not Grecian. "They have arrogantly," he continues, "indulged in every form of pleasure, saying that he who is conversant with other things may grant such license to the irrational part of his nature." They compared themselves to the ocean, which is undefiled by the pollutions that rivers are continually carrying into it. "All things," they said, "must be subjected to us. A small body of water is easily made turbid by any impurity; and so it is in regard to food (the particular subject of discussion) with men of little minds. But, where there is a depth of power, men receive all things, and are defiled by nothing."—"Thus deceiving themselves," says Porphyry, "they act conformably to their error; and, instead of enjoying liberty, throw themselves into a gulf of misery in which they perish."\*

The individuals spoken of by Porphyry were, it appears, ready to admit that men of little minds were corrupted by sensual indulgences. So the theosophic Gnostics, according

\* De Abſtinentiâ ab Animalibus necandis, lib. i. § 42. It may be observed, that this work is addressed to an acquaintance, who had fallen away from the Pythagorean doctrine, and that, in appealing to him, Porphyry has the following allusion to Christians: "I would not intimate, that your nature is inferior to that of some ignorant persons, who, embracing rules of conduct contrary to those of their former life, submit to be cut limb from limb (*τομὴς τε μορίων ὑπομένουσι*); and abhor, more than human flesh, certain kinds of animal food in which before they indulged" (lib. i. § 2). He refers, I suppose, to the abstinence of Christians from the flesh of idol-sacrifices, and the other kinds of food prohibited by the council at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 26, 29).

to Irenæus, affirmed, that, while they were altogether secure of salvation as being naturally spiritual, common Christians, who were not so, must attain salvation through good works and a simple faith, — simple faith, in contradistinction to that perfect knowledge of spiritual things which they themselves possessed.\*

There can be no doubt, I think, that the doctrine, held by the theosophic Gnostics, concerning the spiritual and incorruptible nature of a favored portion of mankind, was abused by certain individuals, and connected with the grossest immorality, as is represented by Clement and Porphyry. But I do not conceive that the individuals of whom they speak were Christian heretics. The supposition of any serious or intelligent belief of the divine mission of Christ is wholly inconsistent with the extreme licentiousness of their principles and practice. So far as they were at all connected with Christianity, we may suppose that they had learnt something concerning it, perhaps through the medium of the Gnostics; and that such was the character of their minds, that they were very ready to break through their old restraints, to treat with contempt the Pagan mythology, to regard themselves as specially illuminated, and to form their crude conceptions into principles that might sanction their licentiousness, as the privilege of their new liberty and their spiritual nature. Sects and individuals of this class may be denominated *pseudo-Christian*; a name to be understood as distinguishing them, on the one hand, from the Christian heretics, and, on the other, from those heathen Gnostics on whom the influence of Christianity, if any, was more remote. Each of the three classes, however, probably passed into that nearest to it by insensible gradations. Of the pseudo-Christian sects I shall speak in the next chapter; and will only here observe, that, taking the name *heathen*, not in the distinguishing

\* Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 6, § 2, p. 29, § 4, p. 31.

sense just mentioned, but in the extent of its meaning, these pseudo-Christians may properly be called Heathens.

As regards the theosophic Gnostics, we have seen that a portion of them were ascetics, as well as the Marcionites; and that immorality was far from being taught or countenanced by the more distinguished of their number. But many of them, a portion so large as, in the minds of some writers, to give, whether fairly or not, a character to the whole, were but partially separated from the heathen world. They joined in its idol-sacrifices, and shared in its licentiousness. The charges brought against them by Irenæus are confirmed, as we have seen, by Clement, as regards one of the two classes into which he divides the heretics. They correspond to the representations of Tertullian. And, at a still earlier period, Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho, introduces Trypho as saying, that "he had learnt that many of those who said that they professed Jesus, and who were called Christians, ate idol-sacrifices," that is, joined in the rites of Pagan worship, "saying that they were nothing hurt by it."\* They justified themselves in their practices by doctrines common to the theosophic Gnostics, which admitted of an easy perversion to the purpose. It is probable, however, that some of them laid little or no stress on the incorruptibility of their spiritual nature; but merely said, as Irenæus states in one passage, that "God did not care much for those things."†

But any approach to idolatry is so contrary to the fundamental doctrine of our religion, and the grosser sensual vices stand in such manifest opposition to the spirituality required by it, and to its express prohibitions, that they would seem to be among the last offences that one believing himself a Chris-

\* Dial. cum Tryph., p. 207.

† . . . . "non valde hæc curare dicentes Deum." — Lib. i. c. 28, § 2, p. 107.

tian might imagine to be countenanced or permitted by Christianity. The case of those Gnostics we have been considering presents, therefore, a remarkable phenomenon. But it is one which may be explained, and its existence, consequently, be confirmed, by considerations drawn from the antecedent history of Christianity, and the state of the ancient world. To these we will now attend.

From the New Testament we learn how imperfectly some of the first Gentile converts comprehended the undivided worship to be paid to the Supreme Being, and the purity of life which Christianity requires. They, like the looser Gnostics of later times, were guilty of licentiousness and of joining in idolatrous rites. "Some," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "being accustomed to the idol, eat even till now as of an idol-sacrifice;"\* and he thus exhorts them, referring to the ancient Israelites: "Be not ye idolaters, as were some of them, as is written, *The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to sport.* Nor let us commit fornication, as did some of them, of whom three and twenty thousand fell in one day."† The latter exhortation seems to have been thus intimately connected with the former, because debauchery was so common a part, or an accompaniment, of the religious festivals and rites of the Heathens. As regards idol-sacrifices, it appears that some of the Corinthians thought, that, as "an idol was nothing in the world," they might, therefore, "sit at meat in an idol's temple;" that is, that they might join their former heathen associates in being present at a sacrifice there offered, and at the entertainment following it, when those portions of the victim which belonged to the offerer were eaten,—that they might, as St. Paul expresses it, "have

\* 1 Cor. viii. 7. I read *συνθηαία*, not (as in the Received Text) *συνευδήσαι*. But which is the true reading is doubtful, and, to the present purpose, unimportant.

† 1 Cor. x. 7. 8

communion with demons," and "partake both of the Lord's table and the table of demons." \*

The early history of Christianity affords another remarkable indication of such errors as have been mentioned existing among its converts. When it was determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem to admit the Gentile converts as Christians to their communion, without their being previously circumcised, — that is, without their first professing themselves proselytes to Judaism, — they were specially enjoined to abstain from idol-sacrifices and from fornication. "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to impose upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: To abstain from idol-sacrifices, and from the eating of blood and of things strangled, and from fornication." † Nothing at first view may strike a modern reader more strangely than that the eating of idol-sacrifices and unchastity should be coupled in the same prohibition with actions morally indifferent in their nature. But I have referred to this decree (as it has been called), because it affords much light on the state of the early Christian community, in reference to the present subject. We will attend to both parts of it, as their connection requires, though only that relating to idolatry and licentiousness is to our immediate purpose.

To explain it, then, two considerations are to be attended to, — the prejudices of the Jewish, and the erroneous sentiments and habits of the Gentile, converts. The result of the deliberations of the council was "after much discussion," ‡ in which those who opposed the admission of the Gentile converts into the Church, unless they first became proselytes to Judaism and assumed the observance of the whole Jewish Law, had, we may presume, particularly urged against them the commission of the acts specially

\* See 1 Cor. viii. 4, 10; x. 20, 21.

† Acts xv. 28, 29.

‡ Acts xv. 7.

prohibited. Why the eating of blood and of things strangled should have given strong offence to those who were zealous for the Law may appear from the fact, that the command to abstain from them is expressly extended in the Law to strangers sojourning among the Israelites.\* It is also represented in Genesis as a universal precept, given by God to Noah and his descendants; † and may, therefore, have been regarded, even by many of those Jews who were most liberally disposed, as binding upon all men. It is next to be remarked, that many of the Gentile converts, as it appears, had no correct moral feeling of the offence, either of joining a feast in honor of an idol, or of unchastity. At such feasts they had been accustomed to be present; and seeing that they knew, as the Corinthians boasted, "that an idol was nothing in the world," ‡ they saw no harm to themselves or others in continuing to enjoy the gratification. As for simple unchastity, it had not been considered by the generality of Heathens as a matter of reproach, except in the female sex. Amid the prevalence of more odious vices, and the general disrespect for woman, it was lightly thought of by the wisest and best among them, and was either permitted by their moralists and philosophers, or scarcely came within their view as any thing to be reprehended. Thus, while, on the one hand, the strong conscientious prejudices of probably far the greater part of the Jewish believers required the prohibition of eating "flesh with the life thereof, which is its blood;" § so, on the other hand, the imperfect notions of religion and morality which

\* Lev xvii. 10-13.

† Gen ix. 4.

‡ St. Paul (1 Cor. viii. 1, seqq) refers to such a boast ironically, with reference to the misapplication which the Corinthians had made of their knowledge: "Concerning idol-sacrifices we know, — for we all have knowledge; knowledge puffs up, but love edifies; he who thinks he knows something knows nothing yet as it ought to be known; but he who loves God has been taught by him, — concerning the eating of idol-sacrifices, then, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and there is no other God but one."

§ Gen. ix. 4

the Gentile converts brought with them made it necessary to insist particularly on the graver offences specified, and explicitly to announce that they were forbidden by Christianity. But the same influences that corrupted the imperfect faith of some of the earliest Gentile converts continued to operate in the second century on the imperfect faith of many of the theosophic Gnostics; nor is there, as some have suggested, any reason to regard those charges as unjust or improbable, when made against a considerable portion of their number, which we know to be true as respects a portion of the professed converts of the apostolic age.

But the influence of heathen principles and practice was not the only source of moral error. Even Christian truths, viewed in relation to the circumstances of the times, were liable to be grossly misrepresented and abused; and sometimes the strong words in which they are expressed by St. Paul were so perverted as to make them contradict the whole tenor of his doctrine. "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,"\* said the apostle, in one of the noblest declarations ever uttered. "The creation itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God."† — "Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made you free."‡ The liberty of which St. Paul speaks was that enlargement of mind produced by Christianity, through new conceptions of duty and of God; liberty from the narrow and bitter prejudices of the Jews, and from the burdensome ritual of their Law, which, according to a remarkable expression of St. Peter, was "a yoke that neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear;"§ and liberty, on the other hand, from heathen superstition, its sanctified follies, its idle terrors, its abominable rites, and its slavery to

\* 2 Cor. iii. 17.

† Gal. v. 1.

† Rom. viii. 21.

§ Acts xv. 10.



gods whose characters were only a source of moral pollution ; that system from which Lucretius thought atheism a happy deliverance : —

“ Humana ante oculos fœde quom vita jaceret  
In terris oppressa gravi sub religione.”

The liberty of which the apostle spoke was freedom from all those hard and degrading observances and supposititious duties, “that servitude to the weak and beggarly principles of the world,”\* through which men have sought the favor of the being or beings whom they have worshipped, in the neglect of moral goodness. It was freedom from “that spirit of bondage and fear” with which the Jews regarded God, and the reception of the Christian spirit, which “bears witness to our spirits that we are children of God.”† In a word, it was freedom from superstition and sin.

This state of mind, this liberty, was to be attained through faith, by becoming a Christian ; that is, through the hearty and practical reception of Christian truth. The favor of God was not, as the unbelieving Jews maintained, to be secured by “the works of the Law ;” that is, by the observance of the Jewish Law, according to their notions of what constituted its observance, — namely, a strict regard to all its *peculiar* requirements and religious rites. Such observance was so far from being the duty of a Christian, as some of the Jewish believers maintained, that the new convert would wholly mistake the character of his religion, if he suffered himself to be persuaded that it was an essential means of obtaining God’s favor.‡ It would be seeking “for completion in the flesh, after having begun in the spirit.”§ — “I tell you,” says the apostle, “ye who seek for righteousness by the Law have done with Christ ; ye have fallen away from the dispensation

\* Gal. iv. 3, 9.

† See the Epistle to the Galatians.

‡ Rom. viii. 14, 15.

§ Gal. iii. 3.

of favor.”\* To have faith, to be a Christian, was all that was required; and “the works of the Law,” in the sense in which that term was used by the unbelieving Jews and bigoted Jewish converts, were not required.

But, further than this, the blessings which believers enjoyed were not conferred in consequence of any previous merit of theirs, of *any* works which they had performed, nor of any claim upon God, such as the Jews believed themselves to have established by keeping their Law. They were his free gift to a world lying in sin. They were offered equally to the tax-gatherer and to the harlot, and to him who was, or fancied himself, righteous. It was not the goodness of men which had entitled them to this new dispensation of favor: it was their sinfulness and misery which had called for this interposition of mercy; “and now to him,” says the apostle, “performing no works” (that is, to him who had performed no works), “but having faith in God, who receives the sinner to his favor, his faith is accounted righteousness.”† His sins were forgiven upon his becoming a Christian; for the first duty of a Christian was reformation, and reformation is the only ground of the forgiveness of sin.

Such were the truths maintained by St. Paul. But the bold, brief, unlimited, unguarded language, in which they were occasionally expressed by him, admitted of being misinterpreted in a manner contradictory to the whole spirit of his teaching, and to the fundamental requirements of Christianity. We perceive that he sometimes apprehended that his doctrine might be so perverted. “Brethren,” he says to the Galatians, “ye have been called to liberty, only use not your liberty as a pretence for the flesh;” that is, as a pretence for the indulgence of sinful appetites and passions.‡ St. Peter, like-

\* Gal. v. 4.

† Rom. iv. 5.

‡ Gal. v. 18: comp. ver. 19–21, where the apostle enumerates the works of the flesh.

wise, exhorts that Christians should conduct themselves as "free, and not using their freedom as a cloak for wickedness, but as servants of God."\* After strongly stating that the pardon of sin was tendered to all by Christianity, St. Paul asks, with reference probably both to the misrepresentations of the unbelieving Jews, and the loose notions of some Christian converts, "What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin that the favor may superabound?"† and earnestly rejects this false inference. How St. Paul's doctrine concerning "works" was abused, we learn from the Epistle ascribed to St. James.‡ It is evident that there were those who thought that to become a Christian, in a loose sense of the word, was all that was required; who had false notions of Christian liberty and of the pardon of sin; and who comprehended the moral duties among the works from which their faith absolved them.

Great changes in the religious opinions and sentiments of men can hardly be effected without producing also extravagances of speculation, moral irregularities, and scepticism. The belief of the larger part of men has rested, and must ever rest, on authority. They are but sharers in the common belief of the community or sect to which they belong; though this belief, and especially its practical effects, may be greatly modified in different individuals by personal qualities, good or bad. The knowledge of the wisest man is but the result of the action of his mind on the accumulated wisdom and judgments of those who have preceded him, and on what he believes, from testimony, to have been the experience of the past. There are no independent thinkers, in the absolute sense of the words. Independent and judicious thinkers, in the more popular sense, are rare. In our intellectual as well as our moral nature, we are parts of each

\* 1 Pet. ii. 16.

† Rom. vi. 1.

‡ James ii. 14, seqq.

other, and cannot, without a severe struggle, release ourselves from the traditionary opinions of those with whom we are connected. One generation inculcates its faith on another; and this is received and incorporated into the mind at a period too early for examination or doubt, and is thus perpetuated from age to age. When, therefore, the authority of the past gives way, the minds of many are liable to be greatly unsettled. To some, the rejection of errors that have been long maintained seems equivalent to the denial of the best established truths; for the grounds of their belief in the one and the other are the same, both having been admitted by them on authority.\* They either obstinately defend all they have been taught, or, through a tendency to scepticism, impatience of doubt, and an inability to estimate moral evidence, and consequently to discriminate what may be *proved* true, and what false, reject the whole together. Others, again, join at once in the new movement; and, feeling themselves released from the ordinary restraints of speculation, confident, like the Corinthians, that they have knowledge, and elated by their victory over what wiser men have revered, pro-

\* However obvious is the general truth of the remarks above made, it may be thought by some that they are not applicable to the revolution of opinion produced by Christianity; but that, on the contrary, the folly of the pagan religions was such, that they could have had no strong hold on the *belief* of men through the influence of authority. But, setting aside all other evidence, the proper fanaticism displayed by the Pagans in their contest with Christianity would alone be sufficient to disprove the error

Some time after writing what is in the text, I was struck by accidentally meeting with the following passage of Lactantius, which I had read long before, but had forgotten. It speaks of the state of things when Christianity had been preached for two centuries and a half. After remarking on the pagan religions, Lactantius says: "These are the religions which, handed down to them from their ancestors, they persevere in most obstinately maintaining and defending. Nor do they consider of what character they are; but are confident that they are good and true, because they have been transmitted from the ancients. So great is the authority of antiquity, that to inquire into it is pronounced impiety. It is trusted to everywhere with the same confidence as is felt in ascertained truth" (Institut., lib. ii. § 6).

mulgate, often in a new dialect, their crude and inconsequent doctrines, perhaps as the anticipated wisdom of a coming age.

In the breaking-up of old opinions, the true and only appeal is to reason. But the process is difficult, and there are not many capable of carrying it through. When we personify abstract reason, we must acknowledge that her decisions are final. But in a large portion of individual minds the actual power of reasoning is small; or rather, if we take into view the whole human race, as spread over the earth, we shall perceive that there is a very large majority in whom the power of determining by themselves any controversy concerning the higher objects of thought cannot be said to exist. In revolutions of religious opinion, therefore, it has been common to substitute for reason an imaginary faculty, — an intuitive perception of the highest truths. Men claim to know that their opinions are true, on the ground that they directly perceive them to be true without the intervention of reasoning. This claim to inward illumination, to an immediate revelation to individual men, has commonly, as in the case of the Gnostics, been asserted by particular sects as their peculiar privilege; but in our times the privilege has been extended, with magnificent absurdity, to the whole human race.

One other fact may be remarked. In all reforms, it is common for men to discern the truth imperfectly, under one aspect alone; to mistake general for unlimited propositions; and to affirm what is true in a certain sense, and with certain modifications, as universally true. They seize, perhaps, on some doctrine recommended to them by its being opposite to an old error; and without defining it in their own minds, or reconciling it with admitted truths, or viewing it in its extent and relations, insist on its absolute, unqualified reception.

But, in the interregnum and partial anarchy that take place between the overthrow of one system and the establish-

ment of another, moral disorders commonly break out. The passions throw off their restraints, as well as the understanding. Men's notions of duty change with their religious belief; and they regard as indifferent actions which they before thought obligatory or criminal, or they even ascribe to the same actions an opposite moral character. The limits of right and wrong are for a time obscured; and there are those who will take advantage of this uncertainty to transgress. The reception of the new system constitutes a distinction which, in the minds of some, supersedes the necessity and merit of common virtues. There is a wild growth of error; and all religious errors, being mistakes concerning the nature, relations, and duties of man, tend to moral evil. Thus all great and apparently sudden revolutions of religious opinion, which are commonly, in some sense, reforms, as being a re-action against abuses and errors, are accompanied in their turn by new errors and excesses.

It was, I conceive, in contemplation of the demoralizing effects commonly attending sudden changes of religious opinion, however beneficial in their final or immediate result, that our Saviour, at the commencement of his ministry, thus addressed his hearers: "Think not that I have come to annul the Law or the Prophets: I have not come to annul, but to perfect. For I tell you in truth, not till heaven and earth pass away shall the smallest letter or stroke pass away from the Law; no, not till all things are ended."\* His meaning was,—Think not that I have come to set aside those religious and moral principles, the true Law of God, which your faith inculcates. I have come to explain them more fully, and to enforce them more solemnly. They remain for ever unchangeable. And thus he goes on to say: "Whoever shall break one of these least commandments [that is, one of the least of those which he was about to give]

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\* Matt. v. 17, 18.

shall be least in the kingdom of heaven. . . . For, unless your goodness exceed that of the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." \*

It was among the Gentile converts that the Gnostics appeared; and we shall perceive, that even under the teaching of St. Paul, and those associated with him, the notions of many of the Gentile converts concerning our religion must have been imperfect and erroneous, when we consider what opportunities they enjoyed for attaining a knowledge of it, for correcting their former prejudices, and for determining its bearing upon the mass of their old conceptions and opinions. They had not the help of the New Testament. With the exception of his own Epistles, the oral teaching of St. Paul and his associates was probably the main source of instruction to a majority of his converts. But the apostle, earnest to spread as widely as possible a knowledge of Christ, and driven hither and thither by persecution, often rested but a short time in the places which he visited. Many, we may believe, after witnessing his miraculous power, and hearing from him the fundamental facts and doctrines of Christianity, professed themselves converts, though they had only a brief opportunity of listening to his expositions of truth and duty. Some doubtless embraced the religion under a temporary excitement of feeling, without a just notion of its character, or a correct sense of the obligations it imposed. We cannot question, that, by the apostle as well as by our Saviour, the seed was often scattered where it sprung up to be choked by weeds. He would encourage every motion toward good. He would not repel any one who professed a desire to turn from sin to righteousness, however crude and unformed were his conceptions of the new religion. He would receive as a disciple whoever re-

\* Matt. v. 19, 20.

garded it with favor. He would act in the spirit of the words of his Master, — “Forbid him not; for he that is not against you is for you.”

Such being the state of things, great errors, schisms, opposing parties, and moral irregularities, existed, in consequence, among the earliest Gentile converts. They are often referred to in the Epistles of St. Paul. Into what gross misconceptions of Christianity individuals who professed themselves converts to it might fall, may appear from the fact, that some among the Corinthians denied its fundamental doctrine of a future life. “How say some among you,” asks the apostle, “that there is no resurrection of the dead?”\* The tendency to these evils was aggravated by a spirit of opposition to St. Paul. This originated among the bigoted Jews, zealous for the observance of the Levitical Law by the Gentile converts; and, there can be little doubt, spread from them to others. In his second Epistle to the Corinthians, there is much referring to opponents who spoke of him disrespectfully and reproachfully. Thus, under the operation of the various circumstances that we have adverted to, individuals were led to form systems for themselves, different from the religion taught by the apostles; and a way was opened for speculations as extravagant as those of the Gnostics, for moral principles as loose as were those of some of their number, and for the existence of sects which, deriving their origin from the preaching of Christianity, had yet no title to the Christian name.

But we must also recollect, that a knowledge of Christianity was spread by others than the apostles, and their immediate associates, and those whose teaching they sanctioned. Of such as were or thought themselves converts, many would be zealous to communicate the new doctrine to

\* 1 Cor. xv. 12.



others. From them it would often pass, more or less mutilated by their ignorance, or adulterated by their prejudices, or blended with their former errors. Of such teachers from among the Jewish converts, who insisted on the observance of the Levitical Law, we have abundant evidence in St. Paul's Epistles. Beside them, we cannot doubt that there were, from the body of Gentile Christians, others with very different conceptions. It is easy to conceive what crude and false notions of our religion may thus have been spread among its remoter and less-informed professors, and how far it may have been divested of that solemn authority with which it impressed the mind of an intelligent believer.

Great errors might be consistent with honest zeal in those who thus communicated their imperfect conceptions of Christianity. But there also appeared among Christians pretended teachers of our religion, to whom honest zeal cannot be ascribed. They are spoken of by St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, as "false apostles, fraudulent workmen, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ," but in truth "ministers of Satan."\* They are described by him as "the many who adulterate, for the sake of gain, the doctrine of God."† The heathen sophists taught for money; and, undoubtedly, often sought to distinguish themselves, for the sake of procuring hearers, by novel, paradoxical, and licentious opinions. When Christianity opened a wholly new field for speculation, producing a strong excitement and action of mind wherever preached, men of a similar character would be ready to take advantage of this state of things. Thus we find that among the Corinthians there soon appeared false teachers, whose object was to procure a maintenance, and who defrauded and oppressed their disciples. It is in reference to them, or to some one of their number, that St.

\* 2 Cor. xi. 13, 15.

† Ibid., ii. 17.

Paul says, "Ye bear it patiently, if a man make slaves of you, if he devour you, if he take your property, if he treat you insolently, if he strike you on the face. I speak it with shame; for it is as if we ourselves suffered." \* Some, probably most or all, of these men, it appears, were Jews; for, speaking of his opponents, he says, "Are they Hebrews? So am I;" † and these Jews might have learned from their own Rabbis to receive fees from their disciples. With the conduct of such false teachers St. Paul contrasts his own in taking nothing from the Corinthians; partly because he would "afford no pretence to those who wished for a pretence." ‡ And, what is remarkable, the very circumstance of his preaching gratuitously was made use of by his opponents to depreciate his character; and he found himself called upon to defend his conduct in this respect. "Have I," he says indignantly, "humbling myself that you might be exalted, done wrong in preaching to you the gospel of God gratuitously?" § The Corinthians were so familiar with the custom of paying the highest fees to those professed teachers of wisdom who were in the most repute, that some of them were disposed to regard as of little value a teacher who did not demand money for his instructions.

He alludes to the subject again, late in life, in his Epistle to Titus. "There are many," he says, "especially among those of the circumcision, who are disorderly, vain talkers, deluding men's minds, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole families, teaching what should not be taught for the sake of shameful gain." || And he also refers to them in his first Epistle to Timothy, written about the same time with that to Titus. "If any one," he says, "teach another doctrine, and hold not to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine of piety, he is puffed up, under-

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\* 2 Cor. xi. 20, 21.

§ Ibid., xi. 7.

† Ibid., xi. 22.

|| Chap. i. 10, 11.

‡ Ibid., xi. 12.

standing nothing, but having a diseased craving for discussions and strifes of words, from which proceed ill-will, quarrelling, reviling, malicious surmises, perverse disputations of men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, thinking to make a gain of piety. From such keep away. Piety, indeed, with contentment, is a great gain. We have brought nothing into the world; it is clear that we can carry nothing out of it: having, then, food and clothing, with these we shall be satisfied. But they, whose purpose it is to be rich,\* fall into temptation, and a snare, and many senseless and pernicious lusts, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. The root of all these evils† is the love of money, through their craving after which some have strayed from the truth, and have pierced themselves through with many pangs.”‡

This class of false teachers existed among the Gnostics: and probably most of their professors of wisdom, like the heathen sophists, gave instruction only to those disciples who were able to purchase it. Speaking of some of their doctrines, Irenæus says ironically, “It seems to me reasonable that they should not be willing to teach them openly to all, but only to those who are able to pay a great price for such mysteries; for these doctrines are not like those concerning which our Lord said, ‘Freely ye have received, freely give;’ but are remote from common apprehension, marvellous and profound mysteries, to be attained with much toil by the lovers of falsehood. Who, indeed, would not spend his whole substance to learn them?”§ Such teachers existing, it can be no matter of surprise, that some of them taught systems as unlike Christianity as those of any of the Gnostic sects,

\* Referring, I conceive, to those before spoken of as “men of corrupt minds.”

† Not “the root of all evil,” as in the common version. The original is, *Ρίζα γὰρ πάντων τῶν κακῶν*.

‡ Chap. vi 3-10.

§ Lib i. c 4, § 3, p. 20: conf. lib. iv. c. 26, § 2, p. 262.

and that others merely borrowed certain conceptions from our religion, without pretending to embrace it.

Had it, indeed, been other than a revelation from God, expressing its divine origin in its whole history and character; had it been only a new form of barbaric philosophy, that had sprung up among the Jews in Galilee, — then, instead of bearing down through the heathen world, a broad and ever widening stream, it would have been choked by corruptions and errors, through which it could not force its way; it would have been wasted and lost, like those rivers of Africa and the East that disappear in deserts of sand. One incommunicable attribute alone, its divine authority, gave it permanence. Whatever might be the mistakes of its disciples concerning it, yet in its own nature it allowed of no amalgamation with human opinions, as sharing its paramount claims. It admitted of no change or addition. This opposed an insuperable barrier to all innovations, which did not at least claim, however falsely, to be original doctrines of Christianity. It controlled the operation of those causes of error which have been pointed out. It is the redeeming principle, which we may hope will yet restore the religion of Christians to the native purity of Christianity. Had it not possessed this character; had it been merely a new system of Jewish philosophy, having a fabulous origin, a system of assertions without proof, — for such Christianity is, if it be not a divine revelation, — a multitude of sects would have appeared among its Gentile followers, not hovering, like the Gnostics, on the outskirts of our faith, but seizing on the whole ground, forming theories of equal authority with the original doctrine, the records of which they could but imperfectly understand; and at the present day, instead of seeing Christianity the professed religion of the civilized world, we should know as little of disciples of Jesus, existing as a distinct body, as we know of disciples of Socrates.

It has appeared, that, with the first propagation of our religion among the Gentiles, causes of error were operating to produce resistance to the authority of St. Paul and the other apostles, schisms, moral irregularities, false doctrines, and apostasy. It was with a foresight of this state of things that Jesus said, "He who perseveres to the end will be saved;" and, at the same time, predicted that many would fall away,— "They will deliver up one another, and hate one another; and many false teachers will arise, and deceive many; and iniquity will so abound, that the love of many will grow cold."\* Notwithstanding the vast power which our religion displayed in changing the characters of men, such disorders and evils were to attend its progress. "But know this," says St. Paul to Timothy, in his last Epistle, when anticipating his own martyrdom, "that hereafter there will be evil times; for those men [a class of men of whom he had before spoken] will be selfish, avaricious, boastful, haughty, given to evil-speaking, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, without natural affection, without faith, slanderers, of unrestrained passions, without humanity, without love for what is good, treacherous, violent, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a show of piety, but renouncing its power. From such turn away. Of their number are those who creep into houses, and make captive weak women, laden with sins, carried away by divers evil desires, always learning and never able to gain a knowledge of the truth. But as James and Jambres contended against Moses, so they contend against the truth; men whose minds are corrupt, and whose faith is unsound. But they will not proceed far; for their folly will be manifest to all, as was that of James and Jambres."†

Who "those men" were, of whom St. Paul thus speaks, appears from what precedes in the Epistle. "Put men in

\* Matt xxiv. 10-12.

† 2 Tim. iii. 1-9.

mind of these things," he says (that is, of certain fundamental truths of Christianity, which he had just expressed), "adjoining them before the Lord not to engage in idle disputes, which profit nothing, but subvert the hearers. . . . Avoid those profane babblings; for these men will go on to greater impiety, and their doctrine will eat into them like a gangrene. Of their number are Hymenæus and Philetus, who have erred from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and who are subverting the faith of some. . . . In a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, and some for honorable and others for mean uses. If, then, one keep himself clear from those things, he shall be a vessel for honor. . . . Avoid those foolish and unlearned discussions, knowing that they produce strife."\* The great body of catholic Christians was continually throwing off these disorders, and separating itself from them. But there can be no reason to doubt the existence of such disorders among the heretical as well as pseudo-Christian sects of the second and subsequent centuries.

There is no historical evidence which justifies us in believing, that what assumes to be a second Epistle of Peter, and that which has been ascribed to the apostle Jude, were the works of those authors; and the character and contents of the writings are unfavorable to the supposition. The ancient Christians are not responsible for any error concerning their authorship; for it does not appear that they were generally considered as genuine during the first three centuries. It seems to me most probable, that they were composed in the first half of the second century, under the names of those apostles; and that the writer of each assumed a character not his own, rather by way of rhetorical artifice, than with intentional fraud. In both, individuals of depraved morals are

\* 2 Tim. ii. 14-23.

deserved as existing among Christians, in language which, if not that of the apostles, we may consider as declamatory and exaggerated, but cannot look upon as without foundation. It appears that those spoken of were not yet wholly separated from the communion of catholic Christians. "They are hidden rocks in your love-feasts,"\* it is said. But they are spoken of as those "who are making a separation;"† and the feelings expressed toward them in these Epistles are such as must have produced their severance from the catholic body. They were not only immoral in their lives, but "false teachers, secretly bringing in destructive heresies;"‡ and the language used may suggest the inference, that these were Gnostic heresies. Thus it is said, that they "denied the Sovereign Lord who bought them, and our Lord Jesus Christ;"§ meaning, we may suppose, that they denied that the Creator was the Supreme God, and held opinions concerning Christ so contradictory to the truth, as to amount to a denial of his real character. To the pretension of the Gnostics, that they alone were spiritual, and possessed of true knowledge, the writers may be supposed to refer indignantly and contemptuously, when they describe those of whom they speak, as "animal, not having the spirit,"|| as "speaking evil of what they understand not," and as "brute beasts, governed by instinct, made to be taken and destroyed."¶—"They promised men freedom," it is said, "while they themselves were slaves of corruption;"\*\* language corresponding to the representations of the early fathers concerning the pretensions and character of many among the Gnostics. It may be added, that they taught for money. "Through covetousness," it is

\* Jude 12: comp. 2 Pet. ii. 13, where *ἀγῶνας* seems probably the true reading.

† Jude 19, *οἱ ἀποδοριζόντες*. The word *ἐαυτούς*, which follows in the Received Text, does not appear to be genuine.

‡ 2 Pet. ii. 1.

§ 2 Pet. ii. 1. Jude 4.

|| Jude 19.

¶ 2 Pet. ii. 12. Jude 10.

\*\* 2 Pet. ii. 19.

said, "they will make a gain of you by fraudulent discourses;"\* and they are compared to Balaam, who "loved the wages of unrighteousness,"† having been tempted by the bribes of Balak. "Woe for them," says the author of the Epistle ascribed to Jude; "for they have walked in the way of Cain, and given themselves up to deceive, like Balaam, for pay, and brought destruction on themselves through rebellion, like Korah."‡ It is not, perhaps, improbable, that these Epistles were written about the time that Gnosticism was first making its appearance, and before it had yet acquired any reputable or able leaders.

The date of the Apocalypse is uncertain; but it is, I think, to be referred either to the latter part of the first, or the earlier part of the second century. In the addresses to the seven churches of Asia, we find mention of the same vices, as existing among professed Christians, which we have before remarked; and, in speaking of them, Balaam is introduced under a point of view different from that in which he appears in the Epistles ascribed to Peter and Jude. Thus, in the address to the church at Pergamus, it is said, "But I have a few things against thee, for thou hast those who follow the teaching of Balaam, who instructed Balak how to cause the Israelites to offend, by eating idol-sacrifices and committing fornication; so hast thou, too, those who thus follow the teaching of the Nicolaitans,"§ — that is, thou, too, hast those who eat idol-sacrifices and commit fornication. The Nicolaitans are also mentioned once before;|| and this appellation appears to be used as equivalent to "followers of Balaam," the significance of "Balaam" in Hebrew, and "Nicolai" in Greek, being the same. The name Nicolaitans was subsequently applied to Gnostics who led licentious lives,

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\* 2 Pet. ii. 3.

§ Rev. ii. 14, 15.

† 2 Pet. ii. 15.

|| Rev. ii. 6.

‡ Jude 11.



till at last it came to be considered as the name of a sect. This sect was then supposed to derive its origin from Nicolaus † (Nicholas), one of the seven deacons appointed by the apostles. ‡ The fable — for such it is to be considered — is rejected by Clement of Alexandria, who gives an account of Nicolaüs, perhaps equally unfounded, in which he is represented as an ascetic. § The Nicolaitans are the sect before referred to, || as, according to Clement, perverting the maxim, that “the body must be abused,” which he ascribes to Nicolaüs.

It appears, then, that, from the times of the apostles, immoral doctrines and practices had existed among professed Christians, and that, due allowance being made for the language of controversial enmity, and for charges brought against Christian Gnostics, which, so far as they were true, were true only of sects not Christian, there is still no reason to doubt that the principles of a portion of the Gnostics did not secure them from the common vices of the pagan world; and that there were those among them who perverted their doctrines to defend themselves in criminal irregularities. The character of the great body of Christians, founded on the requirements of our religion; the supervision exercised by their respective churches over the morals of individual members; their rejection from their number of those whose lives or whose principles were essentially unchristian, — these causes, in connection with the persecution which they suffered from without, were continually operating to produce a separation between them and such individuals as have been described. But there was nothing to prevent such individuals from forming, or from joining, a looser class of heretics, and

\* Irenæus, lib. i. c. 26, § 3, p. 103: conf lib. iii. c. 11, § 1, p. 188.

† Ibid.

‡ Acts vi. 5.

§ Stromat., ii. § 20, pp. 490, 491; iii. § 1, pp. 522, 523.

|| See p. 228.

announcing themselves as Gnostics, or, in other words, as peculiarly enlightened.

Many of the first converts to Christianity must, as we have seen, have had but very imperfect information concerning it. Former prejudices still retained a strong hold on their minds. In the effervescence of the times, false teachers soon arose. The doctrine of the apostles was resisted on the one hand, and perverted on the other. Such being the state of things in the first century, the way was prepared for the existence, in the second century, of doctrines as remote from Christianity as those of the Gnostics. They were the fruit of errors that had sprung up when the Gospel was planted, and had accompanied its growth.

During the second century, all those distinctly recognized as heretics among the Gentile converts were, or were represented to be, Gnostics. As has been before observed, it was natural, that an ill-informed convert, possessed with the common prejudices of the Gentiles, should adopt the Gnostic doctrine concerning the Old Testament and the God of the Jews. It was equally natural, that one who had become separated from the great body of Christians by an immoral life, if he did not renounce his religion altogether, should join a body of heretics whose extraordinary pretensions at once afforded a cover for his vices and a gratification to his vanity. He would pass over to the looser class of theosophic Gnostics. Thus it may be conceived, that, in the second century, those irregularities and vices settled down among them, which, in the first century, appear diffused through the body of Christians.

We have had occasion to bring into view the disorders among Christians, that unquestionably existed during the apostolic age. But we must be careful not to have an exaggerated idea of their nature or extent. They were such as could not but attend so wonderful a change of thought and feeling as our religion produced, and the formation of a body

of Christians in the midst of such a world as lay around them. In the latter half of the second century, the catholic Christians were, as I have said, pre-eminently distinguished by their religious character and high morality; and are liable as a community to no graver charge, than that their virtues bordered on asceticism, austerity, and enthusiasm. The commotion in men's minds produced by the first preaching of our religion had subsided. It was better understood. The books of the New Testament, and especially the Gospels, were now open to the examination of all, and afforded means for studying its history and character. The great body of Christians, who were united in a common faith, had been purified by severe sufferings and persecution, and by the discipline which they maintained among themselves. They were a new class of men, standing in contrast with their heathen contemporaries; and the grosser vices of the world found either no entrance or no toleration among them. But it is not strange if the overwhelming licentiousness of the times forced itself in, where the weaker faith and the erroneous doctrines of the Gnostics presented a feebler resistance, or opened a way for its admission.

But this subject requires some further explanation. We may readily understand why, at the present day, individuals without Christian faith, or without Christian morals, should claim to be called Christians, or why the generality of men in a Christian country, whatever may be the strength of their faith or its practical influence, should acquiesce in being numbered as believers; but the inquiry may well arise, how it was, that, when to be a Christian was to expose one's self to hatred and persecution, any should take that name, except from such sincere conviction and such conscientious motives as would preserve them from indulging in the vices of the heathen world, and especially from justifying such indulgence on principle.

The solution of the fact is, that the looser heretics did not expose themselves to persecution. The hatred of the Heathens to the Christians manifested itself by irregular outbreaks. It would be a great mistake to suppose, that the proceedings against them, at least before the latter part of the third century, resembled the systematized persecution of infidels and heretics in those Roman-Catholic countries where the Inquisition has been established. The steady action of law was unknown throughout the Roman Empire. Its machinery was wholly out of order. Its workings were irregular and interrupted. After the time of Nero till that of Diocletian, the emperors, for the most part, appear rather to have yielded to the spirit of persecution, than to have excited it. The sufferings of the Christians were occasioned far less by their edicts, than by the superstition and enmity of the lower classes, the cruelty of some of the provincial governors, and the license and rapacity of the soldiery. Such persecutors would, in general, select their victims from the most conscientious and zealous among the number of those who, from their circumstances in life, might be most easily oppressed, or who, being conspicuous among Christians, had, at the same time, incurred some particular odium. The more licentious among the heretics had little to fear. They probably called themselves Gnostics, or enlightened men, rather than Christians; for the latter name might not only have exposed them to obloquy and danger, but would have confounded them with the great body of believers, whom they looked down upon with contempt. They were connected with the heathen world in its vices and in its idol-worship. Moreover, a man devoid of conscientiousness and self-devotion need apprehend no danger, even if, by some accident, he might be accused as a Christian. The judicial trials of Christians were very unlike those of heretics in later times. The accused had his condemnation or acquittal in his own power. He might save himself by renouncing his faith, or

by denying it. All that was required of him was to profess himself not a Christian, and to burn incense before the judge in honor of an idol, or to swear by the genius of the emperor.

It appears, indeed, that many of the theosophic Gnostics withdrew themselves from that severe discipline of persecution to which the catholic Christians were exposed, and which tended essentially to preserve their moral energy, their spiritual character, and their high tone of virtue. Tertullian has a discourse, written with all his usual vehemence, against such as dissuaded from martyrdom. It is entitled *Scorpiace*, that is, "An Antidote against Scorpions;" for to scorpions he compares those whom he considered as endeavoring to instil poison into others, which would cause their spiritual death. "When the faith," he says, "is vexed with fire, and the Church is in the midst of flames, like the burning bush, then the Gnostics break out, then the Valentinians creep forth, then all the opposers of martyrdom are made active by the heat to strike, to dart their stings, and to kill."\* They taught, that to profess the faith at the cost of life was not required by God, who desires the death of no man, but was an act of folly. The true profession they maintained to be the holding of the true doctrine in the sight of God, not a profession made openly before men. Similar principles and a corresponding practice are charged upon the heretics generally by Irenæus, though he admits that there had been martyrs from their number. The Gnostics, according to him, maintained that it was not necessary to submit to martyrdom. Their doctrine was the true attestation of their faith.† "Some," he says, "have had the hardihood to despise martyrs, and to cast censure on those who are put to death for the profession of the Lord."‡ The same account is given

\* *Scorpiace*, c. 1, p. 487. † *Cont. Hæres.*, lib. iv. c. 33, § 9, p. 272.

‡ *Ibid.*, lib. iii. c. 18, § 5, p. 210.

of one portion of the heretics by Clement of Alexandria. Through an irreligious and cowardly love of life, he says, they represented martyrdom as self-murder; maintaining the true Christian testimony was not a martyr's testimony, but their own higher knowledge of Him who is really God. Clement, however, says, that other heretics (referring, doubtless, to the Marcionites) were, through enmity to the Creator, eager to expose themselves to martyrdom.\* A writer quoted by Eusebius observes, that some heretical sects had furnished many martyrs, and particularly mentions the Marcionites as claiming this distinction.†

Among the theosophic Gnostics, the ascetics, we may presume, were equally ready with the Marcionites to suffer when their faith required it. Of the practice and the doctrine of others of that class of Gnostics, but especially of the principles of their leaders, we may judge in some degree from a passage of the Valentinian, Heracleon, preserved by Clement of Alexandria,‡ a part of which has been already quoted.§ It, at once, serves to explain, and to give credibility to, what is said concerning them by their catholic opponents. In commenting on the words of Jesus, in which he speaks of that profession of him which his disciples were required to make before men, and especially before those in authority, Heracleon says, that there is a profession which is made by faith and conduct, and another by words; that the latter, which is made before those in authority, is erroneously considered by most as the only profession; but that it may be made by hypocrites, and that it has not been made by all those who have been saved, and, among them, not by several of the apostles. It is only partial, not complete: complete profession is made by works and deeds, corresponding to faith in Christ. He who makes this profession will make the

\* Stromat., iv § 4, p. 571.

† Hist. Eccles., lib v. c. 16.

‡ Stromat., iv. § 9, pp 595, 596

§ See before, p. 227.

other, should it become a duty, and reason require it. He will rightly profess Christ in words who has previously professed him in his dispositions. Heracleon adds more to the same effect, but nothing which alters the complexion of the passage. In his comments upon it, Clement says, that here and elsewhere Heracleon, whom he calls the most approved of the Valentinians, appears to agree in opinion with catholic Christians. He conceives, however, that he has disregarded the fact, that a martyr's profession is alone sufficient proof of sincere faith; and observes on the unreasonableness of supposing that it might be made by a hypocrite. "To profess our faith," he goes on to say, "is the duty of all, for this is in our power: to defend it is not the duty of all, for it may not be in our power," \* — words that may remind one of Latimer, when, broken by age and suffering, he declared to his judges, that he could not argue for his religion, but that he could die for it.

However unobjectionable, in themselves considered, were the leading sentiments of Heracleon, they were, when thus nakedly stated, not altogether apposite to the times. It is not too much to say, that he discovers some tendency to depreciate that bold profession of Christ, by which, when made before a persecuting judge, a Christian sealed his condemnation to torture and death. It is easy to perceive how his view of the subject might degenerate into that which Tertullian, in his "*Scorpiace*," says was presented by the Valentinians.

There is, indeed, a very striking contrast between the passage of Heracleon, and two treatises which remain to us, one by Tertullian, and the other by Origen. That of Tertullian is entitled "*Concerning Flight in Persecution*." It is a strong exhortation not to avoid persecution, either by flight, or by buying off those who threatened to become informers.

\* *Stromat.*, iv. § 9, p. 596.

It is written with the intense earnestness of one who, if he had not been a Christian, might have raised a warrior's voice, of power —

“To cheer in the mid battle, ay, to turn the flying.”

There can be little doubt, that often, under the circumstances of those times, the course of conduct to which he exhorted was that most honorable to Christians, most likely to command the respect of their enemies, and best adapted to extend the knowledge and influence of our religion. In more than one instance, persecution appears to have been checked by the number and intrepidity of those who were ready to submit to martyrdom. There may be errors of reasoning in his work, but the deepest sincerity is evident throughout; and, compared with his other writings, it has a subdued tone of expression suited to the subject. It is characterized, at the same time, by an unshrinking consistency, in which its severe purpose is never for a moment lost sight of, and by a sustained energy of wholly unworldly feeling. Tertullian concludes it with the following words: —

“This doctrine, brother, perhaps seems to you hard and intolerable. But recollect what God said, — *Let him who can receive it receive it*; that is, Let him who cannot receive it depart. He who fears to suffer does not belong to Him who suffered. But he who does not fear to suffer is perfect in love, the love of God; *for perfect love casts out fear*. Thus it is, that *many are called, but few are chosen*. He is not sought for, who is ready to follow the broad way, but he who will take the narrow path. And thus the Paraclete is necessary, the leader into all truth, the encourager to endure all things; and they who have received him neither fly persecution, nor buy it off; we having him on our side, both to speak for us when interrogated, and to aid us when suffering.”

Tertullian, when he wrote this tract, had become a Montanist; and the Holy Spirit, which the Montanists believed to



have spoken by Montanus, they commonly denominated the Paraclete.

There is as great a difference between the treatise of Origen and that of Tertullian as may well exist between two works of able writers, relating to the same subject, and having nearly the same purpose. That of Origen is of particular interest. It was addressed, during a time of persecution, to two friends, with one of whom he appears to have been particularly connected, to exhort them to meet suffering and death with Christian fortitude. When we can bring before our minds all that is implied in one friend's writing to another to encourage him to martyrdom, we may, in one respect, have a distinct conception of the state and character of the early catholic Christians. The address of Origen is affectionate, considerate, and respectful, but with no expression of temporary excitement. On the contrary, it has something of his usual languor and diffuseness of style, and oversubtilty of thought. It is characterized by the calmness of one who was thoroughly penetrated by the spirit of our religion, whose earthly passions had been subdued, whose hopes were fixed on heaven; and who had thus learned to look on life and death indifferently, and to contemplate suffering as one prepared for it.

"I would," says Origen, "that you may be able through the whole of this present conflict to bear in mind the great reward which is laid up in heaven for those who are persecuted and reviled for righteousness' sake, and for the sake of the Son of man; so as to rejoice and exult, and leap for joy, as the apostles in former days rejoiced, when they were deemed worthy to suffer contumely for him. . . . Would, indeed, that your souls may not be at all perturbed, but that, when standing before the tribunal, and when the naked sword hangs over your throats, you may be strengthened by the peace of God which passes all understanding, and made calm by the thought that they who are absent from the body are present with the Lord of all! But, if we are not able always to preserve our firmness, I would at least that our trouble may not

appear, and show itself to those who are alien from our faith."\*

"Whether our profession of Christ be complete or not, we may thus determine. If, through the whole time of the inquisition and temptation, we yield no place in our hearts to the Devil, who would corrupt us with evil thoughts of denying our faith, or cause us to hesitate, or pervert us by some sophistry to what is at enmity with a martyr's testimony and our perfection; if, with this, we bring no stain upon ourselves by any word foreign from our profession; if we endure all the reproach and mockery and laughter and reviling of our adversaries, and the pity which they seem to have for us, regarding us as in error and foolish, and speaking to us as deluded; and, still more, if the strong love of children, or their mother, or any of those dearest to us in this world, do not violently draw us back to their enjoyment or to this life, but, turning from them all, we can devote ourselves wholly to God, and to that life which is with him, as about to be associated with his only Son and with his followers, — then we may say that we have fully perfected our profession."†

The tone of mind expressed by Tertullian and Origen is very different from that of Heracleon. It is to men possessed with their spirit that we are indebted, through the providence of God, for the preservation of Christianity. Wholly relieved, as we are, from the necessity of practising those high and hard duties which were appointed to them, we may be unable, without an effort, to enter into their principles and feelings. Looking, under very different circumstances, to the severe sufferings to which they were summoned, and not having been strengthened to meet them by that preparatory discipline which they had gone through, we may even shrink from sympathy, and feel rather with those who fled, or bought off their accusers, in times of persecution. But let us at least be just, and give honor where honor is due; and not suffer our

\* *Exhortatio ad Martyrium*, § 4; Origen. *Opp.* i. 276.

† *Ibid.*, § 11, p. 281.

attention to be engrossed by the extravagance that sometimes marked the strength of those virtues which the early Christians displayed, and almost necessarily accompanied them in such minds as Tertullian's.

I have spoken of the Gnostics as they existed in the second century, and of the charges brought against them by the *early* fathers, the fathers of the second and third centuries. After this time, there is, as I have before remarked, little reason to believe that any proper Gnostic sects survived in much vigor. Their doctrines were such as strike with the glare of novelty, and are thrown aside when that becomes tarnished. They were superseded by the kindred sect of the Manichæans. Through the union of Christianity with the imperial power, a flood of corruption poured in among Christians; and, in the fourth century, a variety of new, bitter, worldly controversies arose, which diverted men's attention from the old errors of the Gnostics, except as a matter of history, and a means of blackening the name of heretic by odious representations of those who had borne it. There is no reason to doubt that the Gnostics who still remained shared in the degeneracy of that evil age, when darkness was

Gibbon (chap xvi note 100) says, that the treatise of Tertullian is "filled with the wildest fanaticism and the most incoherent declamation." That a work such as I have described should appear to a writer like Gibbon expressive of the wildest fanaticism may easily be supposed. But the assertion that it is full of incoherent declamation is utterly unfounded. No writer ever kept his purpose more steadily in view than does Tertullian in this treatise.

Very probably, Gibbon had never read it; but he had perhaps seen what is said by Jortin: "In the persecution under Severus, many fled to avoid it, or gave money to redeem themselves. Tertullian, like a frantic Montanist, condemned these expedients" (Remarks on Ecclesiastical History (Lond. 1805), vol. ii p 90) — Jortin was a scholar of some elegance and some acuteness, but of little compass of mind, and wanting almost every requisite essential in treating of the history of the early Christians. In aiming at smartness of style, he sometimes falls into flippancy.

beginning to close over men, and they were about to enter on that long series of centuries which marks the history of the world with its mental and moral desolation. But the specific charges urged against the Gnostics by the orthodox historians of heresy in the fourth and fifth centuries, with Epiphanius at their head, are so obviously in great part calumnies, as to afford no safe ground for determining what was, or what had been, the character of those against whom they are brought.

It appears, then, from what precedes, that there was great diversity of moral character among the Gnostics. Some were distinguished for their severe asceticism, and others for their principled licentiousness. The inveterate prejudices of the Gentiles against the Jews and Judaism; the traditionary errors of the Jews concerning their religion; the form, consequently, in which it was presented to the minds of the new converts; and their inability to comprehend the subject correctly, and to solve in a satisfactory manner the difficulties with which it was and is embarrassed,—caused a portion of the Gentile converts to separate the Mosaic dispensation from the Christian, and to regard the latter alone as coming from the Supreme Being. These were the Gnostics. But the arbitrary hypothesis of a Supreme God and an inferior god, by which the Gnostics made a forced separation of Judaism from Christianity, and the inconsistency of their scheme with the plain language of Christ and his apostles, spread confusion and indistinctness through all their conceptions of our religion. Notwithstanding this, the Marcionites, influenced more by moral and Christian feeling than by any other cause in rejecting the representations of the Old Testament as applicable to the true God, did not fall behind the catholic Christians in the strictness or strength of their self-denying virtues. On the contrary, there seems to have been much of fanaticism mixed with their renunciation of the pleasures of this life. But the theosophic Gnostics were less detached from the

heathen world. They drew their vague speculations from its philosophy. There was a tendency in their minds to substitute for the realities of God's revelation a baseless, abstract faith, the evidence of which was the testimony of their own spiritual nature. They seem to have regarded Christianity too much as a system of philosophy, and too little as a divine revelation. They thus stood as a sort of intermediate class between the catholic Christians and the Heathens. Many of them, doubtless, received our religion in good faith, according to their modification of it, and conformed their lives to the moral purity which it requires; but it does not appear that any considerable number felt it to be a means of the moral renovation of mankind, or regarded themselves as called upon to seal their testimony to it with their blood. It is clear that they had not that zeal in avowing and defending and propagating their faith, as of inestimable value to their fellow-men, which exposed the catholic Christians to persecution. Some of them, pretending, perhaps, as men of enlightened minds, to hold in disregard outward forms of religion, joined, of their own accord, in idol-sacrifices; while others, like the ancient heathen philosophers, were probably ready to escape odium and vexation by whatever compliances were necessary with the popular superstitions. It appears, further, that there were some, perhaps many, of their number, who, though not countenanced by their principal leaders, or the more respectable portion of the theosophic Gnostics, seized on the doctrine of the incorruptible purity of their spiritual nature, as a pretence for indulging in gross vices. The existence of such a class of men, not altogether destitute of belief in the divine mission of our Saviour, is, as we have seen, accounted for by causes that had been in operation from the time when St. Paul first gathered converts from the Gentiles. They were early thrown off from the body of catholic Christians, and became apostates or heretics. It may readily be believed that they had no attachment to Judaism which would prevent them

from becoming Gnostics, and, in the pride of their new spiritual superiority, looking down upon the unenlightened and over-scrupulous body of Christians by whom they were rejected. In taking this course, they met with no obstacle; for, among the generality of theosophic Gnostics, there was no combination or discipline which might have repelled or excluded the unworthy from being associated with them.

Nor was there any thing precisely to define the limits between the theosophic Gnostics and individuals holding Gnostic opinions, and more or less affected by the widely spreading influence of Christianity, who yet had no title to the name of Christians. But, though the limits were undefined, there was the well-marked general distinction between those who decidedly belonged to one class or the other, that the former believed, and the latter did not believe, the divine mission of Christ. In respect, also, to one noted pseudo-Christian sect which has been mistaken for a branch of the Gnostics,—I mean the Carpocratians,—it will appear, I think, from what is about to be said, that its members did not even hold Gnostic doctrines. We must therefore separate, as far as possible, the pseudo-Christians from the Gnostics; and to this subject we will next attend.

## CHAPTER V.

ON SOME PSEUDO-CHRISTIAN SECTS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO  
HAVE BEEN IMPROPERLY CONFOUNDED WITH THE GNOS-  
TICS.

WE have seen that Simon Magus is represented by the fathers as the parent of all the heretical sects: while, at the same time, he is described, not as a disciple of Christ, but as opposing himself to Christ as a rival. His followers, the Simonians, therefore, were not Christians. These facts may induce us readily to give credit to the supposition, that among those who may seem to be, or who are, enumerated as Christian heretics, by some one or more of the fathers, there were other sects or individuals who had no title to the name of Christian; though many of them may have held the Gnostic doctrine, that the material universe is the work of a being or beings imperfect or evil. This confusion, if it exist, of Christian and pseudo-Christian sects must be removed, before we can form a correct notion of the Gnostics; and the investigation of the subject may also serve to make us acquainted with the character of the times, and the effects produced by the promulgation of Christianity.

Among the sects referred to, the *Carpocratians* may be first mentioned. They had their origin in Alexandria, and became conspicuous about the middle of the second century.

By Irenæus they are classed with the Gnostics; and, according to him, they affirmed that the world was made by angels. But a comparison of his whole account\* with the information afforded by Clement of Alexandria† may lead us to the conclusion, that the Carpocratians were neither Christians nor heathen Gnostics, but a corrupt sect of Platonists, who pretended to regard Christ as a very eminent philosopher among the barbarians, as Confucius was at one time celebrated by European men of letters. This may appear from what follows.

With Carpocrates was connected, as a founder of the sect, his son Epiphanes, the author of a work "Concerning Justice," from which Clement quotes a series of passages.‡ The purpose of them is to maintain that no property should exist, but that all things should be common to all. "The justice of God," Epiphanes says, "is a certain equal distribution." § Following out his principles, he maintains, as Plato had taught in his Republic, that there should be a community of women; women in Egypt and Greece, as in the East, being regarded much in the light of property. For his doctrine of equality he argues from the natural order of things; according to which, for example, God gives the light of the sun equally to all; and a common nature, and food in common, to all the individuals of the different species of animals. This order he vindicates as good; he regards it as a manifestation of the great moral law of all beings, and ascribes it to the "Maker and Father of all," that is, to the Supreme God.

It appears, therefore, that Epiphanes regarded the order of nature as good, and as proceeding from the Supreme Being. He differed, therefore, from the Gnostics in their fundamental doctrine. They considered the order of nature

\* Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 25, pp. 103-105, c. 28, § 2, p. 107; lib. ii. cc. 81-82, pp. 184-188.

† Stromat., iii. § 2, pp. 511-515.

‡ Stromat., iii., *ubi supra*.

§ p. 512.



as full of defects and evils, and ascribed it, in consequence, to an imperfect Creator. But Epiphanes, it is clear, had no such being in view. He ascribes the constitution of things in the material universe to the Supreme God, whom alone he regards as the Creator. He was, moreover, so far from holding the doctrine of the Gnostics, which identified the Creator with the God of the Jews, that, as quoted by Clement, he considered the command, "Thou shalt not covet," as ridiculous, and more especially the command, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife;" they being, according to him, directly opposite to the ordinances of the Creator as manifested in his works. Epiphanes, then, was not a Gnostic, nor was his father Carpocrates, from whom he derived his principles, nor the followers of both, by whom they were adopted. Nor had they, I conceive, more title to be considered as Christians.

It is the obvious remark of Clement, that the doctrines alleged clearly subvert the Law and the Gospel. Upon their first aspect, they show themselves to be the doctrines of one who had no deference for the divine authority of Christ. Their advocate, Epiphanes, was, according to Clement, a youth of extraordinary precocity, who died at the age of seventeen, after having been educated by his father in the different branches of knowledge, particularly in the Platonic philosophy. Clement says that his mother was a native of Cephallenia, and that in Same, a city of that island, a temple was erected to him as a god, and divine honors were paid him after his death. There seems no reasonable ground for doubting this account. There is nothing in it inconsistent with the customs of the Heathens. Clement lived in the same century with Epiphanes, and in the same city in which he was born; and the facts stated by him are of such a kind as hardly to admit the supposition of any essential mistake concerning them. But the followers of Epiphanes, who paid him divine honors, were evidently Heathens. In conformity with this,

Irenæus tells us that the Carpocratians had images of Christ, together with those of heathen philosophers, as Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, which they crowned with garlands, and honored after the fashion of the Gentiles.\* It appears, therefore, that they placed Christ in the same rank with those philosophers. Some of them, he says, affirmed that they were like Jesus, and some that in certain respects they were stronger or better.†

Respecting their other opinions, Irenæus states, that they believed that "Jesus was the son of Joseph, and was like other men, except that his soul, being strong and pure, remembered what it had seen in its circumgyration with the unoriginated God."‡ These conceptions were founded on the doctrine of Plato, who had taught, in his *Phædrus*, the pre-existent immortality of all souls; and that those of the better class had, before their immersion in matter, ascended to the outer orb of heaven, where they had been borne round in company with the gods, and had beheld the eternal Ideas, there presented to view, of which all true knowledge is only a reminiscence.§

Irenæus, attributing Gnostic conceptions to the Carpocratians, goes on to say, that, according to them, the soul of

\* *Cont. Hæres.*, lib. i. c. 25, § 6, p. 105.

† *Ibid.*, lib. i. c. 25, § 2, p. 103; lib. ii. c. 32, § 3, p. 165.

‡ *Ibid.*, lib. i. c. 25, § 1, p. 103.

§ Plato in *Phædro*, p. 245, seqq. (I refer here, as elsewhere, to the pages of Henry Stephens's edition (Paris, 1578), which are commonly numbered in the margin of later editions.) Plato puts the representations there given into the mouth of Socrates. They appear irreconcilable with those concerning the creation, and the pre-existent state, of souls, given in his *Timæus*, p. 41, seqq. But his imaginations at different times were not unfrequently at variance with each other. — The words of Plato, in his *Phædrus*, in speaking of the vision of eternal Ideas presented to pre-existent souls, as borne round on the outer orb of heaven, are so characteristic of ancient philosophy as to be worth quoting "This supercelestial place," he says, "no poet here on earth has ever celebrated, or will celebrate, worthily. *But thus it is; for one must dare to describe it truly, especially one who is discoursing of the truth*" (p. 247).

Jesus being thus excellent, "power was sent it by God to enable it to escape the Makers of the world, and passing through them all, and being wholly liberated, to ascend to him;" and that the same would be the case with all souls who followed his course. This conception of Makers of the world, disposed to impede the ascent of the soul, is Gnostic; but that Irenæus was in error in ascribing it to the Carpocratians may appear by what has been quoted from Epiphane. It seems to have been not uncommon to attribute incorrectly to one sect opinions held, or reputed to be held, by another. The mistake of Irenæus may have arisen in this way alone, or it may be otherwise accounted for. Through the irregular action of Christianity upon their minds, and the consequent unsettling of their old faith, the Carpocratians may have advanced so far toward the opinions of the catholic Christians, as to regard the inferior gods of the later Platonists, the heathen divinities, as evil spirits; and, if this were so, Irenæus might easily confound those inferior gods with the creator-angels of the Gnostics. That such was the case may be conjectured from what he states to have been said by them; namely, that the soul of Jesus had learned to despise the Makers of the world, in consequence of having been educated among the Jews.\* No Gnostic would have represented Jesus as learning to despise the Makers of the world, among whom they commonly regarded the god of the Jews as the chief, in consequence of his being imbued with Jewish notions; but the Carpocratians, if such as we have supposed them, might well have assigned this as a cause for his contempt of the heathen divinities. It can hardly be, that the account of Irenæus is not erroneous.

The morals of the Carpocratians are portrayed in very dark colors by their contemporaries, Irenæus and Clement. They represent the sect as having brought reproach on the

\* Lib. i. c. 25, § 1, p. 103.

Christian name,—upon “us,” says Irenæus, “who have no communion with them either in doctrine, or in morals, or in daily life.”\* The Heathens, doubtless, were very ready to impute to Christians the vices and licentiousness of those whose minds had merely been put in action by the new faith, of those bands of outlaws, who, not belonging to the number of the true followers of our religion, yet accompanied its march, and hovered round its outposts. Some modern writers have been disposed to regard the charges brought against the Carpocratians by their contemporaries as improbable, and in great part unfounded. But their principal argument is, that the Carpocratians were Christians, and that Christians could not have been guilty of such immoralities. If, on the contrary, we regard them as Heathens, on whom the indirect and irregular influence of Christianity had had no other effect than to set them free from the restraints of common opinion, and who, in consequence, were inflated with a notion of their superiority to common prejudices, we shall perceive that they were in the very state in which moral disorders might be expected to break out among them. The charges against them are, to a great extent, confirmed by the principles of Epiphanes, whom they deified. These are advanced in the broadest manner in the extracts from him given by Clement. He maintained that all laws for the security of private property were in violation of the universal law of God, which had given all things in common to all; and that they alone created the offences which they punished.† This, indeed, may be considered as little more than a speculative principle, since society imposes such severe penalties on those who act in conformity to it, that none are likely to reduce it to practice from a mere conviction of its truth. But his doctrine respecting the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, which not only broke down all moral restraint, but represented it as an ordinance of God,

\* Lib. i. c. 25, § 3, p. 103.

† *Stromat.*, iii § 2, pp 512, 513.

is sufficient, especially when we consider the state of society in which it was promulgated, to remove any doubt concerning the reality of the licentiousness of which the Carpocratians were accused. They were heathen philosophers, and Christian chastity was not to be learned from heathen philosophy. They were, as we have supposed, of the school of Plato, and in two of his most noted Dialogues they might have found a mixture of philosophical jargon with nameless impurity.\* Nor is there any reason to question what Irenæus says of them,† that they, like the later Platonists, professed the science and practice of magic or theurgy, and used their pretended skill for the purpose of deception.

I have reserved for a separate head the mention of one doctrine which Irenæus imputes to them; because, so far as it may appear to have been held by any individuals, it connects them in a class with other *pseudo-Christians*, *maintaining that the practice of scandalous immoralities was a religious duty*. As followers of Plato, the Carpocratians believed the doctrine of the pre-existence and transmigration of souls; and maintained, says Irenæus, that the soul would not obtain its final liberation from matter till it had been conversant with every kind of life and every mode of action; that is, as he explains their meaning, till it had been conversant with every kind of impurity and vice.‡ A strong doubt may at once arise whether such a doctrine could have been professed by any individuals; and the idea of acting upon it, to its full extent, appears altogether monstrous and incredible. Irenæus himself says, that he could not believe that their practice corresponded to their principles. What, indeed, were the principles or the practice of certain liber-

\* I refer to the *Phædrus* and the *Banquet*.

† *Cont. Hæres*, lib. i. c. 25, § 3, p. 103; lib. ii. c. 31, § 2, p. 164, c. 32, § 3, p. 165.

‡ *Lib* i. c. 25, § 4, pp. 103, 104; lib. ii. c. 32, § 2, p. 165.

tine individuals of the second century, called Carpocratians; whether they were more immoral than some have supposed, or less immoral than their opponents represented, — is a subject that may seem wholly uninteresting at the present day. Certainly it is so, as far as justice to their memory is concerned. But, on the other hand, if they held the doctrine imputed to them by Irenæus, or if they held any doctrine which, without being greatly misrepresented, might afford occasion for the statement which he makes, this is a phenomenon in human nature that may well deserve attention.

That they did hold some doctrine of this kind, and that he did not essentially mistake their meaning, may appear from various considerations. Irenæus affirms, that it was expressed in their writings; and that they taught that Jesus had communicated it privately to his apostles and disciples, and had appointed them to communicate it to those who were worthy and obedient. They would not have maintained that a doctrine concerning morals had been taught privately, if it had been such as was correspondent to the tenor of the Gospels. He says that they accommodated to their doctrine the words of our Saviour, "Agree with thine adversary quickly;" representing the adversary as Satan, one of the angels of the world, who would not suffer the soul to obtain its freedom from imprisonment in some mortal body, *till it had paid the uttermost farthing*; that is, according to his explanation, till it had been conversant in all the works of this world. His appeal to their writings, and the particulars which he gives relating to their doctrine, serve to show, that, if his account is not true to the letter, it still had an essential foundation in truth. It is repeated by other writers, particularly by Tertullian, who says,\* that they represented "crimes as the tribute which life must pay;" *facinora tributa sunt vitæ*;

\* De Anima, c. 35, p. 291.

and notes the same perversion of Scripture that is mentioned by Irenæus.

The doctrine in question, stated in its least offensive form, we may, perhaps, conceive to have been, that the soul must have full experience of this life before passing into another state, and that, to this end, it must be conversant with pleasures commonly considered criminal. To represent indulgence in such pleasures as a matter of religious obligation was conformable to the teaching of Epiphanes, that promiscuous intercourse of the sexes was an ordinance of God. Irenæus concludes his account of the moral principles of the Carpocratians with saying, that they taught that men were "saved by faith and love, but that other things were indifferent; that, according to the opinions of men, some were accounted good and others bad, but that nothing was bad by nature."\* By faith they may have meant a firm adherence to their philosophy; for to souls purified by philosophy Plato assigned the highest places after death. But in what they said of faith and love we may recognize, perhaps, a common tendency of those most licentious in their speculations or their practice to shelter themselves under a show of words expressive of common sentiments or belief.

It may appear, then, that the Carpocratians belonged to the same class with those pseudo-Christians mentioned by Clement of Alexandria, as quoted in the last chapter.† The principle common to them all was, that the practice of scandalous immoralities was a matter of religious obligation. It may be observed, in connection, that the charges brought against them, however general may be the terms in which they are sometimes expressed, evidently relate principally to the vices of sensuality and profligacy.

The avowal of such a principle may strike us at first view as a moral absurdity scarcely credible. But it was in truth

\* Lib. i. c. 25, § 5, p. 104.

† See pp. 228-231.

a principle with which Paganism had made men familiar, and which it had thoroughly sanctioned. In the heathen worship, gross indecencies, and abominable extravagances and debaucheries, were represented as acceptable to many of their gods, — to Bacchus, Venus, Cybele, and Flora; not to mention other inferior divinities of a still baser character. The public celebration of many of the heathen rites was marked with deep stains of pollution. In Egypt, where brute animals were deified, heathen writers tell us (whether we can believe them or not), that abominations were committed in their worship, with which even those that Epiphanius charges on the heretics whom he most vilifies are not to be compared.

But, though we receive as essentially true the accounts of Irenæus and Clement respecting the pseudo-Christians whom we have been considering, we cannot extend the same credit to the outrageous charges brought by writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, particularly by Epiphanius, against some of those whom they represented as heretics. There is a most offensive specimen of them in the account which that writer gives of a pretended sect, to which, with the confusion frequent in his writings, he applies the name of "*Gnostics*," used not as a generic, but a specific name.\* The origin of his appropriation of the term to a particular sect may be thus explained.

Irenæus speaks of the Gnostics whom he supposes to have existed antecedently to their being split into different sects and called after different leaders, simply under that generic name, and uses the same general name also concerning those whom he does not refer to any particular class. Especially at the conclusion of his first book, after having given an account of the principal Gnostic sects, distinguished by

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\* *Hæres.*, xxvi.; *Opp.* i. 82.



particular names, as referred to their respective leaders, he says, that beside these a multitude of Gnostics arose, whose different doctrines he proceeds to mention, without denoting those who held them by any specific appellations.\* Among them were those who were afterwards named Ophians and Cainites. Irenæus likewise says, that the Carpocratians called themselves Gnostics;† by which appropriation of the name, they, of course, meant nothing more than that they were "enlightened men."

The latter remark of Irenæus has led Eusebius to affirm, after speaking of Simon Magus, Menander, Saturninus, and Basilides, that "Irenæus writes, that Carpocrates was the father of another sect, called that of the Gnostics."‡ The passage is remarkable, as showing how confused were the notions of Eusebius concerning the earlier heretics, and may lead to the conclusion, that, in his time, they had almost sunk out of notice. In fact, he appears to have had little or no personal knowledge of them, and to have used Irenæus as his principal authority in speaking of them. Him, it seems, he had consulted so negligently, that among the various sects of Gnostics he thus appropriates the name to one, the Carpocratians,§ as if it belonged to them exclusively.

Perhaps, Epiphanius, also, misapprehended Irenæus, mistaking his use of the term "Gnostics" as a generic name, in the passages before mentioned, for its use as a specific appellation; and this mistake may have suggested to him the fabrication of this sect of subordinate Gnostics.¶ But his real

\* Lib. i. cc. 26-31, p. 107, seqq. In the first sentence of chapter twenty-ninth, the word "Barbelo" appears to be an interpolation.

† Lib. i. c. 25, § 6.

‡ Hist. Eccles. lib. iv. c. 7.

§ In appropriating it to the Carpocratians, he differs from Epiphanius, who distinguishes between the Carpocratians and his Gnostics; and who says (Opp. i. pp. 77, 82), that the latter had their origin from the Nicolaitans.

¶ Hæres., xxvi.; Opp. i. 82, seqq.

purpose, I conceive, in his account of this pretended sect, was to cast odium upon all those heretics who bore the name of Gnostics. Accordingly, in his account he makes no distinction between this sect and the whole body of Gnostics, of which, if the sect existed, it could at most have been regarded only as a subdivision. His accusations stand against Gnostics generally, without any limitation; there being nothing in this part of his work from which it could be inferred that there were other heretics who bore the name besides those of whom he is speaking.

In conformity with what may be presumed to have been his purpose, he has loaded this fictitious sect (as I conceive it to be) with charges of absurd doctrines, abominable crimes, and loathsome impurities. "Scruples are felt," says Beausobre, "about giving the lie to Epiphanius, who represents this sect as Christians; but, for myself, I feel much stronger scruples against ranking among Christian heretics individuals who were the most profane of men, if what is said of them be true." \* Certainly, such individuals as Epiphanius describes could not have been Christians; but it may further be observed, that his authority is not of a kind to afford ground for believing that such individuals ever existed, supposing their existence possible. Epiphanius is a writer as deficient in plausibility, as in decency and veracity. He has in an extraordinary manner implicated his own character in his account; for, after describing practices which no mind not thoroughly corrupt could regard as other than ineffably odious, he asserts that he had gained his knowledge from women belonging to the sect, who, in his youth, had endeavored to corrupt his virtue and seduce him to join it; † that he had been under strong temptation, but that God in his mercy

\* *Histoire de Manichée et du Manichéisme*, tom ii. p. 68.

† According to his own account, he was acquainted with the private sign by which the members of the sect recognized each other (*Hæres.* xxvi. § 4, pp. 85, 86).

had delivered him, in answer to his prayers and groans ; and that then he had denounced the members of the sect, whose names had before been unknown, to the "bishops in that place" (what bishops, or what place, he does not specify), and that "the city" (a nameless city) had in consequence been purged by the banishment of about eighty individuals.\*

While, however, we reject in the gross the account of Epiphanius, as not true of any body of men, it does not follow that it is throughout a mere fabrication. There may have been in his age crazy and vicious fanatics, who afforded a certain foundation for it. Some facts are also to be discovered in what Epiphanius has brought together. He mentions and quotes a book of some interest, of which he affords the only account, and concerning which there seems no reason to suspect him of mistake or falsehood. It was called the "Gospel of Eve," as containing the wisdom which Eve had learned from the Serpent.† That it was so called is one among the many proofs which make evident what we shall hereafter have occasion to observe, that the title "Gospel" did not imply that a book to which it was given was a history of the ministry of Jesus. But this book is an object of curiosity for another reason. It appears from the single passage of it extant, quoted by Epiphanius, to have been founded on the Egyptian pantheism. Conformably to this, he says,‡ that those who used it believed that "the *same* soul is dispersed in animals and insects and fishes and serpents and men, and in herbs and trees and fruits." The passage from the Gospel of Eve is to the following effect.§ The writer, or the person represented as speaking, says, "I stood on a high mountain, and I saw a man of large stature, and another mutilated ; and I heard, as it were, a voice of thunder ; and I

\* Hæres., xxvi. § 17, pp. 99, 100.

† Ibid., § 9, p. 90.

‡ Ibid., § 2, p. 84.

§ Ibid., § 8, p. 84.

drew near to hearken, and it spoke to me, and said, 'I am thou, and thou art I; and, wherever thou mayest be, there am I; and I am dispersed in all things; and, from whatever place thou wouldst collect me, in collecting me thou art collecting thyself.' "

What the two figures were intended to symbolize cannot, I think, be conjectured with any probability. But the words uttered appear evidently to be an expression of the pantheistic doctrine, according to which all individual beings are but parts of the one, sole, self-subsistent being, the Universe. There is, perhaps, in the passage, an allusion to the fable of the mutilation of the body of Osiris by Typhon, and the collection of his members by Isis, which, when the absurdities of ancient mythology were transformed by the philosophers of later times into allegories, was mystically explained, as symbolizing the discription and disappearance of Ideas, the essential forms of things, the body of Osiris, through the action of the destructive powers of nature, personified as Typhon, and their being collected anew and re-adapted to their purpose by the receptive and nutritive powers typified by Isis.\* The analogy, also, is striking between the words said to be uttered and the inscription which Plutarch reports to have been engraved on the temple of Isis at Saïs: "I am all that has been, is, or will be;" † Isis being here per-

\* Plutarch. de Iside et Osiride, § 53. Moral, tom. ii. pp. 526, 527, ed. Wyttenbach.

† Ibid, § 9, p 453. Plutarch concludes the inscription thus: "And my veil no mortal has ever lifted." Proclus gives it with a different ending. That it was actually to be found on or in the temple at Saïs is very doubtful. But, as regards our present purpose, the question is unimportant, since the report of Plutarch sufficiently shows the existence of this conception of Isis long before Epiphanius's notice of the Gospel of Eve. See, respecting this inscription, Jablonski's *Pantheon Ægyptiorum*, pars i lib i. c 3, § 7, and Mosheim's notes in his Latin translation of Cudworth's *Intellectual System*, tom i. p. 510, seqq, and p. 522, ed. secund. In the last note, Mosheim gives the correct reading of another remarkable inscription to Isis, of similar import.

sonified as Universal Nature. It is to be observed, that there is great confusion in the Egyptian mythology, the same attributes being ascribed to different divinities. This confusion probably originated from the fact that one god was the peculiar object of veneration in one place, and another in another, so that the highest attributes were in different places ascribed to different gods; but it was at once both solved and aggravated by the mystical theology, which taught that they were all only manifestations of Universal Nature,—each of them but different names for the “One and All,” considered under different relations.

From the title of the book mentioned by Epiphanius, that is, from its being called a “gospel;” from the circumstance that he ascribes its use to an heretical sect; and from the account given by him of the pantheistic opinions of this sect,—we may infer that there were individuals who blended conceptions borrowed from Christianity with the Egyptian mythology and pantheism, and who have been improperly represented as Christian heretics. Pseudo-Christians of like character appear to have existed in Egypt at an early period.

found at Capua, which is to this effect: “Aerrius Balbinus dedicates thee [that is, a part of the universe, a stone] to thyself, who art one and all things, the goddess Isis.”

It may here be observed, that Cudworth should be read with the notes of Mosheim; unless, indeed, one be so acquainted with the philosophy and religion of the ancients, and so accustomed to reasoning, and to estimating the power and the ambiguity of language, as to be able to correct for himself his deceptive representations. He deserves the highest praise for integrity as a writer; his learning was superabundant, and his intellect vigorous enough to wield it to his purpose. But he transfers his own religious conceptions to the heathen philosophers and religionists; he infuses the sentiments of a modern theist into their words; and he confounds together the doctrines of those who preceded Christianity, and of those who were powerfully acted upon by its influence. He thus spreads a luminous cloud over the ancient heathen theology, which Mosheim has done something to dispel. Mosheim has likewise corrected many of the other errors of fact, or mistakes of judgment, which run through the mass of Cudworth’s learning; and has added much to illustrate the topics of which he treats.

We have some information, such as it is, concerning this subject in a curious letter of Hadrian, preserved by the pagan historian Vopiscus.\* The emperor says: "Egypt, my dear Servian, which you recommended to me, I have found to be light, vacillating, and borne about by every rumor. Those who worship Serapis are Christians, and those who call themselves Christian bishops are devoted to Serapis. There is no ruler of a Jewish synagogue, no Samaritan, no Christian priest, who is not an astrologer, a diviner, a leader of a sect.† The patriarch ‡ himself, when he comes to Egypt, is forced by some to worship Serapis, and, by others, Christ." The emperor may not have had the best opportunities for obtaining information respecting the state of religion among the Egyptians, and he may have trusted too much to the jeers of his courtiers; but notwithstanding this, and notwithstanding the levity and obvious extravagance of his letter, we cannot suppose that what he says was wholly without foundation. Some state of things existed in Egypt, in the first half of the second century, which gave occasion to his representation. The minds of many, it may be presumed, were affected by Christianity, who had but a very imperfect knowledge of what Christianity was, and some of whom combined it very grossly with their former errors.

\* In his Life of Saturninus.

† "A leader of a sect" The Latin word is *alip̄tes*, which means *anointer*, one who anoints those who have bathed, or the combatants for the arena. But, as it is not easy to perceive any appropriateness in this meaning, I have ventured to render the word in a sense of the Greek *ἁλείπτης*, which is used metaphorically to signify *an inciter* or *leader*. Perhaps the emperor wrote the word in Greek letters. But after all, in using the expressions which he does, *mathematicus*, *haruspex*, *alip̄tes*, he may have had in mind a line in Juvenal's description of a needy Greek adventurer (Sat. iii. 76), "*Grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, alip̄tes*;" and may thus, in employing the word *alip̄tes*, have intended only an expression of contempt.

‡ The patriarch of the Jews must be meant, as the title and dignity of patriarch were not known in the Christian Church till long after the time of Hadrian.

It seems probable that the book mentioned by Epiphanius, the Gospel of Eve, containing the wisdom which Eve learned from the Serpent, had its origin among certain reputed heretics, who, according to Origen, were not Christians. They were called *Ophians* or *Ophites* (we might render the name *Serpentists*), from the Greek word *ὄφις*, a serpent; because, as Origen says, they took the part of the Serpent who seduced Eve, and represented him as having given good counsel to our first parents.\* Irenæus, in one of the last chapters of his first book,† before referred to, ‡ gives an account of the doctrines of a certain sect not named by him, but which, as is evident from a comparison with Origen and other subsequent writers, was that of the Ophians. Nothing entitled to much credit is added by the later historians of the heretics to the notices of Irenæus and Origen.

Origen's mention of them is incidental. There is no reason to distrust its essential correctness, but he enters into no general exposition of their system. The account of Irenæus is confused and improbable, and appears to have been put together from imperfect and inconsistent sources of information. The statements respecting them by him and by the other writers who speak of them as heretics, as the author of the Addition to Tertullian, Epiphanius, and Theodoret, when taken in connection, present a system of absurdities so palpably irreconcilable, that no sect could have professed it for their creed. We may compare it to a machine composed of parts of various others, interfering among themselves in such a manner, that evidently it could never have been in operation.

We can therefore admit, with any confidence, only some very general conclusions respecting the doctrines of the Ophians.§ Whether Christians or not, they appear to have

\* Origen. cont. Celsum, lib. vi. § 28, Opp. i. pp. 651, 652.

† Cap. 30.

‡ See p. 276.

§ See the account of Irenæus, as before referred to, lib. i. c. 30; and that

been of the class of theosophic Gnostics, holding very disparaging opinions of the Creator, whom they regarded as the god of the Jews. They believed that he, with six other powers produced by him, informed and ruled seven spheres surrounding the earth (those of the sun and of the planets known to the ancients); and that through these spheres the soul had to pass after death in its ascent to the spiritual world. The way, which might otherwise be barred by those powers, was open to such as were initiated in their mysteries, and had learned the proper invocations which the soul must address to them in its ascent, to obtain its passage. Their doctrines have the appearance of being a caricature of the doctrines of the proper Gnostics. Maintaining the common opinion, that the Creator was *not spiritual*, and regarding him as being opposed to the manifestation and development of the spiritual principle in man, they honored the Serpent for having thwarted his narrow purposes, withdrawn our first parents from their allegiance to him, induced them to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and thus brought them the knowledge of "that Power which is over all." By a serpent, the Phœnicians and Egyptians are said to have symbolized the Agathodæmon, the benevolent power in nature (the god Cneph of the Egyptians);\* and the Ophians, perhaps, regarded the Serpent under the same aspect. Clement of Alexandria once incidentally mentions the Ophians, in speaking of the origin of the names of different sects. Some, he says, are denominated "from their systems, and from the objects they honor, as the Cainists and the Ophians."† The Cainists or Cainites (whom we shall have occasion to notice hereafter) are represented as magnifying Cain. The Ophians honored the Serpent.

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of Origen in his work, *Against Celsus*, lib. vi. Opp. i. pp. 648-661; lib. vii. pp. 722, 723; lib. iii. p. 455.

\* Eusebii *Præparatio Evangelica*, lib. i. c. 10.

† *Stromat.*, vii. § 17, p. 900.



Nothing concerning the Ophians would seem to be better established than this fact. But it is not stated by Irenæus. On the contrary, according to his account of their system, the Serpent was originally vicious, produced by the Creator in the dregs of matter, and treacherous to him. Afterwards, indeed, he appears employed by *Sophia* or Wisdom, the offspring of the Unknown God, the mother but adversary of the Creator, for the purpose of seducing our first parents to eat of the forbidden fruit; by which they obtained a knowledge of the Supreme Divinity. But the Creator, who was himself desirous of being regarded as the highest God, being, in consequence, angry with the Serpent, expelled him from heaven, where he had before dwelt, and cast him down to earth. After this fall, he is made to correspond to the serpent of the Apocalypse, the Devil; and is represented as producing six other evil powers (answering to the six subordinate powers of the Creator), and as being, together with them, full of malice equally toward men and their Maker.

But we have good reason to believe, that Irenæus, our earliest and one of our two principal authorities, has fallen into great errors respecting the system of the Ophians, when we find him saying, notwithstanding what has been stated, that they affirmed the Serpent to be "the *Nous* (Intellect) himself;"\* for this was the name by which theosophic Gnostics designated their first emanation from the Supreme Being. Elsewhere he says, that some of the Ophians maintained that Wisdom herself became the Serpent.† And, in connection with this, we cannot but be struck with the intrinsic improbability of the scheme that he ascribes to the sect; according to which, the Devil was employed for the purpose of communicating spiritual wisdom and a knowledge of the true God to our first parents. These,

\* Lib. i. c. 30, § 5, p. 110.

† Ibid., § 15, p. 112.

however, are but some of the inconsistencies that present themselves in the system that he has depicted.

That the Ophians held the Serpent in honor appears from the testimony of Clement and Origen, the indications furnished by Irenæus himself, the reports of later writers, and the evidence of their distinguishing name. Epiphanius says, that they glorified the Serpent as God, or as a god, and affirmed him to be Christ;\* though, at the same time, with the grossest inconsistency, of which he seems to have had some indistinct consciousness, he gives a mutilated variation of the account of Irenæus by which the Serpent is identified with the Devil.† The same inconsistency exists in the relation of the author of the Addition to Tertullian, who follows Irenæus in part, but affirms that the Ophians placed the Serpent above Christ.‡ And Theodoret, who, I think, was embarrassed by the contradictions of his predecessors, says, that *some* of the Ophians worshipped the Serpent. §

Modern writers have, in consequence, conjectured, either that there were two sorts of Ophians, or that there were two Serpents in their system, one celestial and the other terrestrial. But it would have been strange, if two classes of persons, one honoring the Serpent as a god, and the other regarding him as the Devil, had both been comprehended under the same name; and as for the conjecture of two Serpents, it is certain that Irenæus, and the other ancient writers who mention the Ophians, speak only of one. A general solution of this and of other difficulties concerning them is to be found in the obscurity of the sect, in the consequent ignorance and inaccuracy of the reporters of their doctrines, and in the great probability that these doctrines were little settled among themselves.

\* Indic. in tom. iii., lib. i. p. 229. Hæres., xxxvii. §§ 1, 2, pp. 268, 269 § 5, pp. 271, 272.

† Ibid., §§ 4, 5, pp. 271, 272. ‡ Apud Tertullian., Opp. § 47, p. 220.

§ Hæret. Fab., lib. i. n. 14, p. 205.

Our purpose does not require us to enter further into the detail of their system, and to force our way through the crude accounts of ancient, and the hypotheses of modern writers. The labor would in any case be unprofitable. It may be the duty of one exploring these difficult subjects to spend his own time in pursuing obscure paths, tangled with briers, till he is satisfied that they lead to nothing; but it can seldom be worth while to conduct others over the same ground, that they may enjoy a like gratification.

The accounts of the Ophians belong, for the most part, to the fabulous history of the Gnostics. Nor should I have dwelt even so long upon this obscure and insignificant sect (for such we shall perceive it to have been), were it not for its having been magnified into importance by the discussions concerning it in modern times, and, still more, if it were not for the relation in which Origen says the Ophians stood to Christianity.

He speaks of them in his work against Celsus. Celsus had charged Christians with calling the Creator "an accursed god,"\* upon the ground, as appears, that this was done by the Ophians; for it was his custom to accuse Christians of the extravagances and errors of heretical and pseudo-Christian sects. But Origen says, in reply, that the Ophians were so far from being Christians, that they spoke of Jesus not less reproachfully than did Celsus himself, that they admitted no one into their fellowship without pronouncing curses against him, and that they were unwilling to hear his name even as that of a wise and virtuous man.† Origen calls them a very obscure sect,‡ and speaks of their number as very small; there being, he says, none or very few remaining.§ Celsus had brought forward a symbolical diagram, having reference to the ascent of the soul through the seven spheres of the Creator and his angels; and Origen is principally occupied by an account of this diagram, and the prayers inscribed upon

\* Contra Cels., lib. vi. § 28; Opp. i. 651.

† Ibid., § 24, p. 648.

† Ibid., p. 652.

§ Ibid., § 26, p. 650.

it. It bore names given to the seven Powers, barbarous to Grecian ears, borrowed partly from the Old Testament, and partly, according to Origen, from the art of magic.\* But he says, that though he had travelled much, and everywhere sought the acquaintance of men professing to know any thing, yet he had never met with any one who professed to explain it.†

In a passage antecedent to what I have quoted, Origen says: "Celsus seems to me to have become acquainted with some sects that have no fellowship with us even in the name of Jesus. Thus, perhaps, he has heard of the Ophians or the Cainites, or of some others, holding doctrines wholly foreign from those of Jesus."‡

Origen's account of the insignificance of the sect of the Ophians is confirmed, if it need confirmation, by the facts, that they are not *named* by Irenæus, nor are their peculiar doctrines referred to in his long confutation of different heresies, which forms the greater part of his work; that they are but once incidentally mentioned, as we have seen, by Clement of Alexandria; and that they are not noticed at all by Tertullian. Their want of notoriety appears likewise from the uncertainty respecting their name. None is given them by Irenæus. By Clement and Origen they are called Ophians (Ὀφιανοί); by Epiphanius, and some Latin writers who mention them, Ophites (Ὀφῖται). Theodoret speaks of them as "Sethians, or Ophians, or Ophites;"§ but Epiphanius and others make quite a distinct sect of the Sethians,|| and the probability is, that no proper sect ever existed under this name.¶ The obscurity of the Ophians is

\* Cont. Cels., lib. vi. § 32, pp. 656, 657.

† Ibid., § 24, p. 648.

‡ Ibid., lib. iii. § 13, p. 455.

§ Hæret. Fab., lib. i. n. 14, p. 204.

|| They are the thirty-ninth Heresy of Epiphanius; Opp. i. 284.

¶ The Sethians have been mentioned before (p. 174, note). I conceive, that "Sethians" was, as there explained, only a name by which some of the Gnostics denoted the *spiritual*; Seth being regarded as their progenitor or prototype.

made still more evident by the very confused and inconsistent accounts of their doctrines, — accounts such as would not have been given of those of any well-known sect.

There is, as we have seen, a disagreement between Origen on the one side, and Irenæus and subsequent writers on the other, concerning the relation in which the Ophians stood to Christianity. Irenæus represents them as Christian heretics; Origen, as an antichristian sect. The difference would have been of no account, if Origen had merely said that they were not Christians. According to Irenæus, they held that their doctrines were not openly taught by Christ, but that Jesus, whom they distinguished from Christ, remaining on earth eighteen months after his resurrection, then communicated them to a few of his disciples, who had capacity for such great mysteries.\* Thus founding a system of their own invention on a supposititious basis, they might well be considered as not Christians. But Origen says, that they pronounced curses against Jesus. With so slight a hold as they had upon Christianity, and probably with no very fixed belief, they may have passed through a natural process of deterioration during the interval between Irenæus and Origen. There is nothing improbable in the supposition, that a vain and foolish sect should first claim to be a sort of transcendental Christians, and then, finding themselves contemned by the great body of believers, and perceiving that their speculations were only embarrassed by their pretended faith, should have determined to rely on their own spiritual wisdom alone, and should have openly professed their rejection of Christianity with something of the spleen of apostates.

This is an obvious solution of the disagreement between Origen and Irenæus. But perhaps we are to look still farther for an explanation of it. With more or less analogy to some later sects, the theosophic Gnostics believed that they

\* *Cont. Hæres.*, lib. i. c. 30, § 14, p. 112.

were guided to the truth by the divine light within, that spiritual nature which they considered as peculiar to themselves. Their systems consequently were the truth. They were derived from a higher source than reasoning, and were not amenable to it. They could be judged of only by those whose spiritual apprehensions were conformed to their reception. These principles, it is true, were not consistently acted upon. The Gnostics appear to have reasoned as well as they were able; and, as we shall hereafter see, were even reputed in their day subtile reasoners from the Scriptures. The claim of a higher internal source of knowledge, of the nature and operations of which reason is not the judge, is commonly resorted to only when all other modes of proof fail. Men do not condemn the aid of reason before it is withdrawn. But it was the tendency of the self-confident state of mind which characterized the Gnostics to lead them to reject instruction from without. A true Gnostic was his own teacher; and, though he found his system in the Gospel, yet his own mind was the book in which it was first read. Christianity was likely thus to become, in his view, an abstraction, the name for a body of opinions and imaginations, which he had embraced because he knew them to be true, independently of what others regarded as evidence of the divine authority of our religion.

Together with this, the theosophic Gnostics generally distinguished between the being who appeared as a man, Jesus, the son of the Creator, and the celestial being, Christ, or the Saviour, or the spiritual Jesus, who, at the baptism of the former, descended into him from the Pleroma.\* To use the words of Tertullian, they "made Christ and Jesus different beings. The one had escaped from the midst of multitudes, the other was apprehended: the one in the solitude of a

\* Irenæus, lib. i. c. 7, § 2, pp. 32, 33; lib. iii. c. 10, § 4, p. 186, c. 11, §§ 1, 3, pp. 188, 189: conf. Lib. i. c. 2, § 6, pp. 12. 13.

mountain, overshadowed by a cloud, had been resplendent before three witnesses; the other, with no mark of distinction, had held common intercourse with men: the one was magnanimous, but the other trembling: and, at last, Jesus had been crucified, and Christ had risen."\* It was the Christ of the Pleroma whom they regarded as the teacher of divine truths; and those truths which were most mysterious and transcendent they conceived him to have taught in secret meanings and enigmas, and in mere intimations and allusions, recorded in the Gospels, and in private, unrecorded discourses addressed only to those capable of comprehending them. But the system of the Ophians appears throughout as a coarse exaggeration of the doctrines of the theosophic Gnostics. In common with those Gnostics, they regarded Jesus as the son of the Creator. But of the Creator they gave the most disparaging representations, and are said to have pronounced him accursed. It is not, then, difficult to believe that they extended like enmity to his son; nor is there any thing very improbable in supposing, that they might have pretended to be, in some sort, followers of Christ, while they rejected Jesus as a divine teacher, and even proceeded to the extravagance, mentioned by Origen, of pronouncing curses on his name.

From what has been said, it may appear that sects and individuals who are not to be considered as Christians have been erroneously reckoned among the Gnostics. Nor is their existence difficult to be accounted for. Christianity soon became an object of universal attention. It was a new phenomenon in the intellectual world. A power unknown before was in action, and spreading its influence far beyond the sphere to which it might seem to be confined. Our religion essentially affected the heathen philosophy contem-

\* De Carne Christi, c. 24, p. 325.

porary with it, and introduced into it conceptions such as had not been previously entertained. The doctrines of our faith were undoubtedly more or less known to many who had not studied them in the Gospels, nor were acquainted with its evidences as a revelation from God. Though not received by such as of divine authority, and but imperfectly understood, they gave a new impulse to thought. Men's minds were thrown into a state of effervescence, new affinities operated, and new combinations of opinion were formed. There were, doubtless, those whose vanity prompted them to profess an acquaintance with the new barbaric philosophy, as they deemed it, and to represent themselves as having exercised a critical and discriminating judgment upon it, and as having discovered in it certain important views, and certain truths not before developed. In some of those affected by our religion, their imperfect and heartless knowledge of it would be rather destructive than renovating, breaking down all barriers of thought, and opening the way for wild speculations. Hence, as we may easily believe, new systems of opinion sprung up, not Christian, but deriving some characteristic peculiarities from Christianity, — the systems held by those whom we have called pseudo-Christians.

But how, it may be asked, came the pseudo-Christians to be confounded with Christian heretics? Various considerations afford an answer to this question. As I have remarked, no well-defined boundary was apparent between the two classes. They passed insensibly into each other. In the reliance of the Gnostics upon the revelations of their own spiritual nature, we may perceive a tendency to infidelity. It was an error which would lead many to undervalue, and some to reject, the authority of Christ. The pseudo-Christians were reckoned among the Gnostics, because many of them held Gnostic opinions; and such opinions were attributed even to those, the Carpocratians, by whom they were not



held. Another cause of this confusion may be found in the fact, that the Heathens would naturally blend together in one general class all those who, breaking away from the old forms of philosophy, were evidently involved in the new movement in the intellectual world produced by Christianity. The enemies of our religion charged upon Christians what might be truly or falsely said of such sectaries as we have been considering. And, on the other hand, the catholic Christians, regarding the Gnostics as not true believers, as not belonging to the Christian body, were not careful to discriminate between them, and those who, though corresponding with them in many respects, had yet no title to the Christian name. Hence it was, we may conceive, that the Gnostics were classed with individuals whose doctrines and whose lives many of them regarded with as strong disapprobation as did the catholic Christians.

In the preceding chapters, we have taken a general view of the Gnostics, and of their relation to the catholic Christians. We have traced their external history, and attended to the respective characters of those writers from whom our knowledge of them is derived. We have considered their morals, — an essential point in determining how far they may be regarded as sincere though erroneous believers; and we have discriminated them from sectaries with whom they have been confounded, who, though borrowing some conceptions from Christianity, were not Christians.

It has been suggested, likewise, that the occasion of Gnosticism was to be found in the aversion of the Gentiles to Judaism, in the form in which it was presented to their minds; and to this subject we will next attend.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ON GNOSTICISM, CONSIDERED AS A SEPARATION OF JUDAISM FROM CHRISTIANITY.

“EVERY heretic, as far as I know,” says Tertullian, “ridicules the whole of the Old Testament.”\* — “To separate the Law from the Gospel,” he observes in another place, “is the special and principal object of Marcion.”† — “The labor of the heretics,” he says, “is not in building up an edifice of their own, but in destroying the truth. They undermine ours to erect their own. Take away from them the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Creator God, and they will have nothing to urge against us.”‡ — “It is the case with all those,” says Irenæus, “who hold pernicious doctrines, that, being influenced by the opinion that the Law of Moses is different from, and contrary to, the doctrine of the Gospel, they have not turned to consider the causes of the difference between the two Testaments.”§

Origen, in maintaining the necessity of interpreting the Scriptures allegorically, says, that many have fallen into great errors from not understanding them in their spiritual sense. He first instances the unbelieving Jews, who, he says, rejected the Messiah in consequence of interpreting the

\* *Advers Marcion.*, lib. v. c. 5, p. 467.    † *Ibid.*, lib. i. c. 19, p. 374

‡ *De Præscriptione Hæreticorum*, c. 42, p. 217.

§ *Cont. Hæres*, lib. iii. c. 12, § 12, p. 198.

prophecies concerning him literally. He then proceeds thus :—

“The heretics, too, when they read, *A fire has blazed from my wrath* ;\* — *I am a jealous God, requiting the sins of fathers upon children to the third and fourth generation* ;† — *I repent that I have anointed Saul to be king* ;‡ — *I am the God who makes peace and creates evil* ;§ and, in another place, *There is no evil in a city which the Lord hath not wrought* ;|| and yet further, *Evil came down from the Lord to the gates of Jerusalem* ;¶ and, *An evil spirit from the Lord tormented Saul*,\*\* — when they read these and ten thousand other similar passages, they do not indeed venture to reject the divine origin of the Scriptures [the Jewish Scriptures], but they believe them to have proceeded from the Creator whom the Jews worship. Regarding him, in consequence, as imperfect, and not good, they think that the Saviour came to make known the more perfect God, who, they affirm, is not the Creator. Holding various opinions concerning this subject, and having deserted the Creator, who is the unoriginated only God, they have given themselves up to their own fabrications ; and have formed mythological systems, according to which they explain the production of things visible, and of other things, invisible, the existence of which they have imagined. But indeed,” continues Origen, “the more simple of those who boast that they belong to the Church, who regard none as superior to the Creator, and in this do well, have yet such conceptions of him as are not to be entertained of the most cruel and most unjust of men,” — in consequence, as he immediately remarks, of their understanding the Jewish Scriptures, not “according to their spiritual sense, but according to the naked letter.” ††

“The most ungodly and irreligious among the heretics,” says Origen, in his Commentary on Leviticus, “not understanding the difference between *visible* Judaism and *intelligible* Judaism, — that is, between Judaism in its outward form and Judaism in its

\* Jer xv. 14.

† Exod. xx. 5.

‡ 1 Sam. xv. 11.

§ Isa. xlv. 7.

|| Amos iii. 8, so quoted by Origen.

¶ Micah i. 12.

\*\* 1 Sam xvi 14.

†† De Principiis, lib. iv. § 8 ; Opp. i. 164, seqq.

hidden purport, — have at once separated themselves from Judaism, and from the God who gave these Scriptures and the whole Law, and have fabricated for themselves another God beside him who gave the Law and the Prophets, and made heaven and earth.”\*

Of the opinions of Ptolemy, the Valentinian, respecting the Jewish Law, we have a detailed account in his Letter to Flora, which he seems to have intended as a sort of introduction to Gnosticism, — as an exposition and defence of its fundamental doctrine. He begins by stating, that some believe the Law to have been ordained by God the Father, and others by the Adversary, Satan. Both opinions he rejects as altogether erroneous. It could not have proceeded from the Perfect God and Father, because it is imperfect, and contains commands unsuitable to the nature and will of such a God; nor, on the other hand, can the Law, which forbids iniquity, be ascribed to the Evil Being. His own opinion, he conceives, may be proved by the words of Christ, to which alone, he says, we may safely trust in investigating the subject. It is, that the Law contained in the Pentateuch does not proceed from a single lawgiver, consequently not from the god of the Jews alone. A part of it is to be ascribed to him; another part was given by Moses on his own authority; and a third portion consists of laws interpolated by the elders of the people. In proof that some laws proceeded from Moses alone, he quotes the words of Christ, — “*Moses, on account of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to put away your wives; but in the beginning it was not so, for God established the connection; and what the Lord has joined together, let no man put asunder.*”† To the laws interpolated by the elders, he regards Christ as referring, when he taught the Jews that they had set aside the Law of God by the traditions of their elders.‡ Of that

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\* Philocalia, c. 1, *ad finem*; Opp ii. 192.

† Matt. xix. 4-6.

‡ Mark vii. 3-9.

portion of the Law which he ascribes to the god of the Jews, some of the precepts, according to him, are wholly unmixed with evil. They constitute the Law, properly so called,—that Law which the Saviour came not to destroy, but to perfect. They are those of the Decalogue.\* Other precepts have a mixture of something bad and wrong, and were abrogated by the Saviour. Such, for instance, is the law respecting retaliation, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” A third class, consisting of the ceremonial law, relates to things typical of those to come, more spiritual and excellent, in the Christian dispensation. Why the laws of the god of the Jews should contain types of Christianity, Ptolemy does not explain in this Letter. He probably accounted for it through a secret influence from the Pleroma, under which, as we shall hereafter see, the Creator was represented by the Valentinians as acting.

Ptolemy next proceeds to answer the inquiry, Who was that god who gave the Law? He was not, he repeats, the Perfect God, nor was he Satan; but he was the Fashioner and Maker of this World, and of the beings contained in it, not good (that is, not possessing unmingled goodness), like the Supreme God, nor evil and wicked like Satan; but standing in the midst between them, one who may properly be called Just, as one who rewards and punishes according to his measure of goodness; not unoriginated, like the Supreme God, but being an image of him.

In this account of his opinions, Ptolemy probably gives as

\* There is here, apparently, an example of that inconsistency of which we find so much in the theological speculations of the ancients. Christ, according to Ptolemy, retained and perfected “the ten commandments” But Ptolemy believed these to have been given, not by the Supreme Being, but by the god of the Jews. Now the first of them is, “Thou shalt have no other God beside me;” a command which, according to his system, it is impossible that Christ should have confirmed, since Ptolemy regarded him as having come to reveal another and far greater God than the god of the Jews.

favorable a view as was entertained by any Gnostic of the Jewish Law, and of the god of the Jews.

It is to be observed, that the Gnostics did not reject the Pentateuch, and the other books of the Old Testament, as unworthy of credit. On the contrary, their system was founded on the supposition, that those books contained a correct account of the Jewish dispensation, and of the events connected with it. Difficulties and objections then pressed upon them. There was much that offended their reason, their moral sentiments, and their prejudices as Gentiles. Receiving the history as true, and understanding it in its obvious sense, they could not believe that the god of the Jews was the same being as the God of Christians. Thus they were led to separate the Law from the Gospel, and to introduce the agency of another being, wholly distinct from the Supreme God, in the government of the world. The corner-stone of Gnosticism was thus laid.

But in regarding many of the representations given of God in the Old Testament as unworthy of the Supreme Being, the Gnostics did not stand alone. The more intelligent of the catholic Christians, contemporary with them, strongly felt and expressed these and other objections to which the Old Testament was, in their view, exposed, if understood in its obvious sense. This feeling is shown in the quotations before given from Origen, and the subject well deserves further consideration; for there are few of more importance in the history of Christian opinions.

There is a work called the "Clementine Homilies," or the "Clementines," the author of which is unknown. The time of its composition is likewise uncertain; but, judging from the fact, that, though its contents are such as would have been likely to attract the attention of Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, it is yet not noticed by any one

of them, and, from other considerations, it probably was not written before, or much before, the end of the second century. It is remarkable as an ancient work of fiction, resembling a modern romance. It is written in the form of an autobiography of an individual bearing the name of Clement. Clement represents himself as having been converted to Christianity by the preaching of Barnabas and Peter, and as having been present at many of the discourses of the latter, particularly with Simon Magus, who was represented by the writers against the Gnostics as the founder of their heresy. There is much relating to the objections to the god of the Jews (that is, in the view of the writer, to the Supreme God), which the Gnostics derived from the Old Testament; and of these objections the author, under the person of Peter, presents a bold solution. He gives up at once to reprobation the passages on which they were founded, maintaining that they are false representations of God. He represents them as existing in the Jewish Scriptures, through the permitted agency of Satan, to serve as a test for distinguishing between those who are, and those who are not, willing to believe evil concerning God.\* According to him, what in those Scriptures is accordant with right conceptions of God is to be received as true, and what is not so is to be rejected as false.†

But in his view of the general character of the Old Testament, the author of the Homilies stood apart from the other Christian writers of the second and third centuries. They received its books from the Jews, and received them with the Jewish notions of their divine authority, and were therefore obliged to resort to modes different from those of the Gnostics, or the author of the Clementine Homilies, for solving the difficulties which they equally felt.

\* Homil. ii. §§ 38-52; Homil. iii. § 5.

† Homil. ii. § 40, seqq.; Homil. iii. § 42, seqq.

In the solution that I shall first mention, as resorted to by the catholic Christians, will be perceived that remarkable resemblance, without coincidence, which often appears between their doctrines and those of the Gnostics. In comparing them together, we see sometimes, as in the present case, a striking likeness fashioned out of materials essentially different, while in other cases the material is the same, but moulded into a different form. In the solution of which I now speak, the Logos of the catholic Christians takes the place of the Creator of the Gnostics as the god of the Jews; those representations of the Divinity in the Old Testament, which catholic Christians, equally with the Gnostics, regarded as incompatible with the character of the Supreme Being, being referred by them to the Logos.

In his Dialogue with Trypho, Justin Martyr says: "I will endeavor to prove to you from the Scriptures, that he who is said to have appeared to Abraham, to Jacob, and to Moses, and is called God, is another god [that is, divine being], different from the God who created all things; another, I say, numerically, not in will; for I affirm that he never did any thing at any time but what it was the will of Him who created the world, and above whom there is no other God, that he should do and say."\*

Justin, among many other similar proofs that there is another god beside the Supreme God, quotes those passages in which it is said, that God ascended from Abraham; that God spoke to Moses; that the Lord came down to see the tower of Babel which the sons of men had built; and that God shut the door of the ark after Noah had entered. "Do not suppose," he says, "that the unoriginated God either descended or ascended; for the ineffable Father and Lord of all neither comes anywhere, nor walks nor sleeps, nor arises; but remains in his own place, wherever that may be."

\* Dial. cum Tryph., p. 252.



After describing the greatness, omniscience, and omnipresence of the Supreme God, he proceeds: "How, then, can he speak to any one, or be seen by any one, or appear in a little portion of the earth, when the people could not behold on Sinai even the glory of him whom he sent! . . . Neither Abraham, therefore, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, nor any other man, ever saw the Father, the ineffable Lord of all, even of Christ himself; but they saw him who, through the will of the Father, was a god, his Son, and likewise his angel, as ministering to his purposes."\*

Tertullian regarded the Son, or the Logos, as having been the minister of God in creation and in all his subsequent works. To him he ascribes whatever actions are ascribed to God in the Old Testament. "He always descended to converse with men, from the time of Adam to that of the patriarchs and prophets. . . . He who was to assume a human body and soul was even then acquainted with human affections; asking Adam, as if ignorant, Where art thou, Adam? repenting of having made man, as if wanting prescience; putting Abraham to trial, as if ignorant of what was in man; offended and reconciled with the same individuals: and so it is with regard to all which the heretics [the Gnostics] seize upon to object to the Creator, as unworthy of God; they being ignorant that those things were suitable to the Son, who was about to submit to human affections, to thirst, hunger, and tears, and even to be born and to die. . . . How can it be, that God, the Omnipotent, the Invisible, whom *no man hath seen or can see*, who *dwells in light inaccessible*, walked in the evening in paradise, seeking Adam, and shut the door of the ark after Noah had entered, and cooled himself under an oak with Abraham, and called to Moses from a burning bush? . . . These things would not be credible concerning the Son of God, if they were not writ-

\* Dial. cum Tryph., pp. 410, 411.

ten: perhaps they would not be credible concerning the Father, if they were."\*

In his work against Marcion, Tertullian, after explaining various particular passages of the Old Testament objected to by him, says, that he will give a summary answer to the rest. "I will give," are his words, "a simple and certain account of whatever else you have objected to the Creator, as mean and weak and unworthy. It is, that God could not have had intercourse with men, unless he had assumed the feelings and affections of humanity, by which he humbled and tempered to human infirmity the intolerable might of his majesty. Unworthy indeed it was in respect to himself, but necessary for man; and therefore became worthy of God. since nothing can be so worthy of God as the salvation of man." Marcion himself believed that God had manifested himself as Christ; and Tertullian proceeds, in language so foreign from what we are accustomed to, that it hardly admits of a literal translation: "Why do you think that those humiliations [the facts in the Old Testament which Marcion so regarded] are unworthy of our God, seeing that they are more tolerable than the contumelies of the Jews, and the cross, and the tomb? Are not those humiliations ground for concluding,† that Christ, subjected as he was to the accidents of man, came from the same God whose assumption of humanity is made by you a matter of reproach? For we further maintain, that Christ has always been the agent of the Father in his name, that it was he who from the beginning was conversant with men, who had intercourse with the patriarchs and prophets; being the son of the Creator, his Logos, whom he made his Son by producing him from himself, and then set him over all that he disposed and willed; 'making him a little lower

\* *Advers. Praxeam*, c. 16, pp. 509, 510.

† "An hæ sunt pusillitates quæ jam præjudicare debebunt," &c. For "An," we may read "An non," as the sense (about which there is no uncertainty) seems to require.

than the angels,' as was written by David. In thus being made lower than the angels, he was prepared by the Father for those assumptions of humanity with which you find fault. He learnt from the beginning, being then already a man, what he was to be at last. It was he who descended, he who questioned, he who demanded, he who swore. But that the Father has been seen by none, the Gospel common to us both\* bears witness; for in this Christ says, 'No one has known the Father but the Son.' For he had pronounced in the Old Testament likewise, 'No one shall see God and live;' thus determining that the Father is invisible, in whose name and by whose authority he who became visible as the Son of God was God. . . . Thus whatever you require as worthy of God will be found in the invisible Father, remote from human intercourse, calm, and, if I may so speak, the God of the philosophers; but whatever you censure as unworthy will be ascribed to the Son, who was seen, and heard, and had intercourse with men, who sees the Father and ministers to him, who unites in himself humanity and divinity, being in his powers divine, in his humiliation a man, that what he parts with from his divinity he may confer on man. All, in fine, that you regard as dishonorable to my God is the pledge of human salvation."†

In the passage just quoted, beside the doctrine, that the Logos, or Son, was the being represented as God in the Old Testament, and that to him actions might be ascribed which would be unsuitable to the Father, there appears another conception, which is often presented in the writings of Tertullian, and is employed by him elsewhere to answer the objections of the Gnostics to the Old Testament. It is, that, in both the Jewish and Christian dispensations, the means

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\* That is, the Gospel of Luke as used by Marcion.

† Advers. Marcion., lib. ii. c. 27, pp. 395, 396.

used by God to effect his purposes are such as in the view of man may appear unworthy, incongruous, and contemptible. He regards this as characteristic of the special manifestations of God. He grounds the conception particularly on a passage of St. Paul, which he frequently quotes or alludes to: "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put wise men to shame, and the weak things of the world God has chosen to put to shame the strong, and the mean things of the world, and the despised, has God chosen; and things that are nought, to do away what exist."\* Tertullian, understanding this passage as he did, was able to reconcile himself to much that might otherwise have offended him in the Old Testament. "Nothing," he says, "ordained by God is truly mean, and ignoble, and contemptible, but only what proceeds from man. But many things in the Old Testament may be charged upon the Creator as foolish and weak and shameful and little and contemptible. What more foolish, what more weak, than the exaction by God of bloody sacrifices and sweet-smelling holocausts? What more weak than the cleansing of cups and beds? What more shameful than to inflict a new blemish on the ruddy flesh of an infant? What so mean as the law of retaliation? What so contemptible as the prohibition of certain kinds of food? Every heretic, as far as I know, ridicules the whole of the Old Testament. For God chose the foolish things of the world to confound its wisdom."†

It is to be observed, however, that Tertullian had, in a former part of his work,‡ ably defended the reasonableness of all the requisitions of the Law of which he here speaks, except circumcision; and that the defence of the Old Testament, in its literal or obvious sense, was not neglected by other fathers.

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\* 1 Cor. i 27, 28.

† *Advers. Marcion.*, lib. v. c. 5, p. 467

‡ *Ibid.*, lib. ii. c. 18, seqq.

But, in connection with those that have been mentioned, another solution was found for its difficulties in the supposition of a hidden or allegorical sense. This imaginary sense was believed not to be expressed by the words in their direct meaning, but to be one of which the direct meaning presented an allegory, a type, a symbolical representation, or an enigmatical expression. The allegorical mode of interpretation was unsupported by any tenable reasoning; it proceeded on no settled principles; it had no definite limits in its application; there was not, even professedly, any test of its correctness; nor, generally, does there appear to have been a distinct apprehension that the meaning educed by it was intended by the writer to whose words it was ascribed.\* The subject

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\* The following may serve as a specimen of allegorical interpretation. In Exod. xv. 23-27, it is related, that the Israelites, after crossing the Red Sea, came to the waters of Marah, which were so bitter that they could not drink them; but that the Lord showed Moses a tree, which, when he cast into the water, it became sweet; and that afterwards, the Israelites arrived at Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees.

"It is very strange," says Origen, "that God should show Moses a tree to cast into the water, to make it sweet. Could he not make the water sweet without a tree? But let us see what beauty there is in the inner sense." He accordingly explains, that, allegorically understood, the bitter waters of Marah denote the Jewish Law, which, in its literal purport, is bitter enough; so that of its bitterness the true people of God cannot drink. "What, then, is the tree which God showed to Moses? Solomon teaches us, when he says of Wisdom, that *she is a tree of life to all who embrace her*. If, therefore, the tree of wisdom, Christ, be cast into the Law," and show us how it ought to be understood (I compress several clauses into these words), "then the water of Marah becomes sweet, and the bitterness of the letter of the Law is changed into the sweetness of spiritual intelligence; and then the people of God can drink of it." Origen afterwards remarks on the subsequent arrival of the Israelites at Elim with its twelve springs and seventy palm-trees "Do you think," he asks, "that any reason can be given why they were not first led to Elim? . . . If we follow the history alone, it does not much edify us to know where they first went, and where they next went. But, if we search out the mystery hidden in these things, we find the order of faith. The people is first led to the letter of the Law, from which, while this retains its bitterness, it cannot depart. But, when the Law is made sweet by the tree of life, and begins to be spiritually understood, then the people passes from

was still further confused by the circumstance, that the term "to allegorize" was applied to the use of simply figurative language, of which the true meaning was sufficiently obvious; and such language, in consequence, was confounded with that to which an imaginary mystical sense was assigned. Thus, Clement of Alexandria, in remarking on the words of our Saviour, "The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep," speaks of Christ as by *sheep* expressing *allegorically* a flock of men.\* As to Origen, though it is not probable that he had ever so stated the subject to his own mind, yet his customary modes of speaking in relation to it imply that all interpretation of Scripture which is not literal is allegorical, and that there is no choice but of the one mode or the other.

The allegorical mode of interpretation thus affords a striking illustration of the indistinct conceptions and unsubstantial

the Old Testament to the New, and comes to the twelve fountains of the apostles. In the same place, also, are found seventy palm-trees. For not alone the twelve apostles preached faith in Christ; but it is related, that seventy others were sent to preach the word of God, through whom the world might acknowledge the palms of the victory of Christ."—Homil in Exod. vii §§ 1, 3, Opp ii 151, 152.

Such is the style of interpretation which, intermixed with good sense, just remarks, and correct moral and religious sentiments, prevails throughout the expository works of Philo and Origen, and is frequent in the writings of many of the other fathers beside Origen; especially, as regards our present purpose, in those of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clement, and Tertullian.

"Ce qu'il y a de commode," says Le Clerc, "dans cette manière d'expliquer la Bible, c'est que l'on fait de son texte la même chose que les Peripatéticiens font de leur matière première, *quæ neque est quid, neque quale, neque quantum, neque quicquam eorum quibus ens denominatur*. On le tourne comme on veut; on lui donne la forme que l'on trouve à propos; et l'on y trouveroit également son compte, quand il auroit dit tout le contraire."—Bibliothèque Universelle, tom xii. p. 20.

\* Εἰ δὲ ἡ ποίμνη ἡ ἀλληγορούμενη πρὸς τοῦ Κυρίου οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ ἀγέλη τις ἀνθρώπων ἐστίν, κ. τ. λ.—Stromat. i. p. 421. The same use of *ἀλληγορέω*, or an equivalent term, may be found on p. 104, ll. 17, 30; p. 129, ll. 20, 29; p. 138, l. 5; p. 148, l. 5, p. 528, l. 21; p. 708, l. 11; p. 771, l. 23; p. 806, l. 17.

reasoning of the ancients. For we must not suppose that it was adopted by the fathers alone, or confined in its application to the Scriptures. It was prevalent in the age of which we speak. It had for a long time been applied by the heathen philosophers to the offensive fables of their mythology, the scandal of which they endeavored to remove by representing them as symbolical representations of certain truths concerning the physical and moral world; a mode of explanation which, with little good sense, has been continued to our own day.\* The revelations in the heathen mysteries probably consisted in great part of such interpretations of the heathen mythology. The philosophical Jews also had resorted to it in the exposition of the Old Testament; and, in applying it to the same book, the fathers only followed in the broad path which had been cleared by Philo. His explanations of the Old Testament are throughout allegorical. He had the same feeling as the Christian fathers of the objections to which it is liable, if understood in its obvious sense, and of the supposed necessity of recurring to a hidden meaning. Thus, in reference to the account of the formation of Eve, he affirms that "what is said concerning it is fabulous;" that is, that the obvious meaning is fabulous. "How can any one," he asks, "credit that a woman, or any human being, was made out of the rib of a man?" And after various objections to the story, he proceeds to convert it into an allegory.† Speaking of the serpent which tempted Eve, and of the brazen serpent of Moses, he says, "These things, as they are written, are like prodigies and portents; but, when allegorically explained, the fabulous immediately disappears, and the truth is manifestly discovered."‡ After quoting the

\* On this subject, see (in the "Bibliothèque Choisie," tom. vii p 88, seqq.) the remarks of Le Clerc, who, in the compass of a few pages, treats it with his customary clearness and judgment.

† *Legis Allegoriæ*, lib. ii. Opp. i. 70, ed. Mangey.

‡ *De Agriculturâ*, Opp i. 315.

words, "And God planted a garden in Eden," he says, that to understand this of his planting vines, or fruit-trees of any kind, would be great and hardly curable folly. "We must have recourse to allegory, the friend of clear-sighted men." \* Thus, also, in commenting on the passage, "Cain departed from the face of God," he regards it as proving that what is written in the books of Moses is to be understood *tropologically* (that is, allegorically), the apparent meaning presented at first sight being far from the truth. "For if God have a face, and he who wills to leave him may easily remove elsewhere, why do we reject the impiety of the Epicureans, or the atheism of the Egyptians, or the mythological fables of which the world is full?" † Many similar passages occur in his writings. ‡

Nor was the allegorical mode of understanding the Jewish Scriptures introduced by Philo. He celebrates the Therapeutæ, a sect among the Jews who devoted themselves to religious exercises and meditation, and of them he relates, that they occupied much of their time in the allegorical exposition of the sacred writings, regarding the literal meaning as symbolical of hidden senses, expressed enigmatically. He says, that they compared the whole Law to an animal, its body being the literal precepts, but its soul the invisible sense lying treasured up in the words; and adds, that, in their allegorical exposition, they had for models the writings of ancient men, the founders of the sect. § Elsewhere, Philo repeatedly refers to this mode of interpretation as common. "I have heard," he says in one place, "another explanation from in-

\* De Plantatione Noe, Opp. i. 334: conf. De Mundi Opificio, Opp. i. 37; Legis Allegoriæ, lib. i. Opp. i. 32.

† De Posteritate Caini, Opp. i. 226.

‡ As, for example, Legis Allegoriæ, lib. ii. Opp. i. 70, lib. iii. 88. Quod Deterius Potiori insidari solet, Opp. i. 194, 209, 223. De Posteritate Caini, Opp. i. 232, 234, 235. Quod Deus sit immutabilis, Opp. i. 292, — *et alibi*.

§ De Vitâ Contemplativâ, Opp. ii. 475, 483.



spired men, who consider most things in the Laws as visible and spoken symbols of the invisible and unspeakable."\* The confidence with which, throughout his works, he proceeds on the system of allegorical exposition, without explaining or defending it, shows that it was well known and admitted. Its general prevalence is likewise made evident by the fact, that it appears in quotations from the Jewish Scriptures in the New Testament, particularly in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The Christian fathers, from the beginning, adopting the conceptions of their age, interpreted the Old Testament allegorically. Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho, abounds in such expositions of it; but, in a controversy with a Jew, he was not called upon to defend it. He makes evident, however, his notions of its character, as requiring to be thus explained. After having represented the blood of the passover, with which the Israelites sprinkled their doorposts when the first-born of the Egyptians were destroyed, and the scarlet line which the harlot Rahab hung out when Jericho was taken, as both intended for types of the blood of Christ, shed for the deliverance of men, he thus addresses Trypho: "But you, who explain these things in a low sense, impute much weakness to God, through understanding them so simply, and not inquiring into the true purport of what is said. For thus [that is, by understanding the Scriptures thus literally] even Moses may be judged a transgressor; since, after commanding that no likeness should be made of any thing either in heaven, or on the earth, or in the sea, he himself made a brazen serpent, and, setting it up for a sign, directed those who were bitten to look upon it; and, by looking upon it, they were saved. So the serpent, then, whom God cursed in the beginning, and destroyed, as Isaiah proclaims, with a great sword,† will be thought to have then saved the people; and thus we shall understand

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\* De Specialibus Legibus. Opp. ii. 329.

† Isa. xxvii. 1.

such things foolishly, like your teachers, and not as symbolical." \*

Irenæus does not resort to allegorical interpretation in directly answering the objections of the Gnostics to the Old Testament. He defends it in its obvious meaning, in much the same manner as modern divines have done. But, in maintaining its connection with Christianity, he represents it as full of types, shadowing forth in their hidden senses the coming dispensation; and in such hidden senses it appears that he himself was disposed to take refuge from the difficulties that pressed upon its obvious meaning. Thus he says: "One of the ancient presbyters relieved my mind by teaching me, . . . that when the wrong actions of the patriarchs and prophets are simply related in the Scriptures without any censure, we ought not to become accusers (for we are not more observing than God, nor can we be above our master), but to look for a type. For no one of those actions which are mentioned thus uncensured in the Scriptures is without its purpose." †

Tertullian does not dwell at length on the objections of the heretics to the Old Testament in any of his works except that against Marcion. Marcion rejected the allegorical mode of interpretation; ‡ and, in reasoning with him, Tertullian defends, and with ability, portions of the Jewish Law and history understood in their obvious sense, except so far as this sense was modified by his belief, before mentioned, concerning the agency of the Logos. But he abounds, at the same time, in allegorical expositions of the Old Testament, some of them exceedingly forced. He speaks of "the secret meanings of the Law, spiritual as it is, and prophetic, and

\* Dial. cum Tryph., pp. 374, 375.

† Cont. Hæres., lib. iv. c. 31, § 1, p. 268.

‡ Tertullian. advers. Marcion, lib. ii. c. 21, p. 392; lib. iii. cc. 4, 5, pp. 298, 399. Origen Comment. in Matt., tom. xv. § 3, Opp. iii. 655. In Epist. ad Romanos, lib. ii. Opp. iv. 494, 495.

full of figures in almost every part." \* And, in another place, he describes God, the God of the Old Testament, as "making foolish the wisdom of the world, choosing its foolish things, and disposing them for man's salvation;" this being, he says, the hidden wisdom of which the apostle speaks, "which was in foolish and little and shameful things, which lay hid under figures, allegories, and enigmas, and was afterwards to be revealed in Christ." †

Celsus, who lived in the second century, was acquainted with this manner of explaining and defending the Old Testament, and expressed himself vehemently against it. "He attacks the history of Moses," says Origen, "and finds fault with those who explain it tropologically and allegorically." ‡ "He seems to me to have heard of writings containing the allegories of the Law, which if he had read, he would not have said, 'The pretended allegories written concerning these fables are far more offensive and absurd than the fables themselves; for, with marvellous and altogether senseless folly, they bring together things which can in no way whatever be fitted to one another.' He seems," continues Origen, "to refer to the writings of Philo, or to others still more ancient, as those of Aristobulus." § But Origen did not mean to imply, that Celsus, in his attack on the allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament, had not in view Christian allegorists as well as Jewish. He had a little before quoted from him a passage, in which Celsus, speaking of some of the narratives in Genesis and Exodus, says, that "the more rational of the Jews and Christians turn them into allegories. They take refuge in allegory because they are ashamed of them." In reply, Origen makes a strong retort upon the

\* *Advers. Marcion.*, lib. ii. c. 19, p. 391.

† *Ibid.*, lib. v. c. 6, p. 467.

‡ *Cont. Cels.*, lib. i. § 17, Opp. i. 336.

§ *Ibid.*, lib. iv. § 51, p. 542.

obscene fables of the mythology of the Pagans, which their philosophers represented as allegories.\*

The early fathers, in general, allegorized freely in their expositions of the Old Testament, and evidently regarded this mode of exposition as a means of removing objections to it. But no other of their number has recurred to this method so confidently as Origen, of whom Jerome, before he began to regard his opinions as heretical, declared, that "none but an ignorant man would deny, that, next after the apostles, he was the master of the churches."† Origen, proceeding on the hypothesis of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, allegorized the New Testament as well as the Old; perceiving no other method of solving the great difficulties which, on that hypothesis, often presented themselves to his mind in the verbal meaning of the Gospels and Epistles.‡ His notions of the Old Testament appear in the passages already quoted; but it may be worth while to adduce a few others.

"There are many of the laws of Moses," he says, "which, as regards their literal observance, are absurd or impossible. It is absurd to forbid the eating of vultures,§ a kind of food which none, however pressed by hunger, would resort to. An infant not circumcised on the eighth day, it is said, shall be cut off from the people. || Were any law which was to be understood literally, required respecting this matter, it ought to have been, that the parents, or those who have the care of such an infant, should suffer death."¶ In one of his Homilies, speaking of the directions concerning the sin-offering in Leviticus,\*\* he says, "All this, as I have often before observed when the passage was recited in the church, unless

\* Cont. Cels., § 48, p. 540; § 50, p. 542.

† Præfat. in lib. de Interpret. Nomin. Hebræor. Opp. ii. 3.

‡ See p. 103. § Lev. xi. 14. Deut. xiv. 13. || Gen xvii. 12, 14.

¶ De Principiis, lib. iv. § 17, Opp. i. p. 176. Origen treats at length of the subject of allegorical interpretation, in the work just referred to, p. 164, seqq.

\*\* Chap. vi. 24-30.

it be understood in a sense different from the literal, is more likely to be a stumbling-block in the way of Christianity, and to overthrow it, than to be matter for exhortation and edification."\* Elsewhere, in treating of the distinction of clean and unclean food, after having allegorized the laws respecting it, he thus goes on: "If we say that the great God promulgated laws to men which are to be *thus* understood, I think that they will appear worthy of the divine majesty. But if we cleave to the letter, and receive them as they are understood by the Jews, or as they are commonly understood, I should blush to affirm and profess that such laws were given by God. The laws of men, as those of the Romans, or of the Athenians, or of the Lacedæmonians, would seem more refined and reasonable. But if the Law of God be understood, as is taught by the Church, then it evidently surpasses all human laws, and may truly be believed to be the Law of God."†

A few more passages will sufficiently illustrate Origen's opinions on this subject. Speaking of different narratives in Exodus, he says, "These are not written to afford us instruction in history, nor is it to be supposed that the divine books relate the acts of the Egyptians; but what is written is written to afford us instruction in doctrine and morals.‡ . . . We, who have learned to regard all that is written, not as containing narratives of ancient times, but as written for our discipline and use, perceive that what is here read takes place *now*, not only in this world, which is figuratively called Egypt, but in each one of ourselves."§ This mode of allegorizing Egypt into the world and the inferior part of our nature was, with much else of the same character, derived by Origen from Philo. || In answering certain objections of

\* Homil. in Lev., v. § 1, Opp. ii. 205. † Ibid., vii. § 5, Opp. ii. 226.

‡ Homil. in Exod., i. § 5, Opp. ii. 181. § Ibid., ii. § 1, Opp. ii. 183.

|| Philo de Migratione Abrahami, *passim*.

Celsus, founded on the Old Testament, he has these words : \*  
 “ We say the law is twofold, literal and allegorical, as others have taught before us. The literal has been pronounced, not so much by us as by God, speaking in one of the prophets, to consist of ordinances not good, and statutes not good ; † but the allegorical, according to the same prophet, is said by God to consist of good ordinances and good statutes. ‡ Certainly the prophet does not here [in speaking of the Law in the passages referred to] assert manifest contradictions. And, conformably to this, Paul says, *The letter*, that is, the Law understood literally, *kills* ; but the *spirit*, that is, the Law understood allegorically, *gives life*.” §

The allegorical or hidden meaning was divided into the moral, and the mystical or spiritual ; the moral being supposed to relate to morality, and the mystical to the doctrines of religion. In remarking on the declaration of St. Paul, *The works of the flesh are apparent*, || Origen allegorizes the passage as referring to the literal sense of the Old Testament. This was figuratively called the carnal sense, being compared to the body in man ; while the two branches of the allegorical — the moral, and the mystical or spiritual — were compared to the soul and to the spirit, according to the threefold division of man in ancient theology. “ The history of the divine volumes,” he says, “ contains the works of the flesh, and is of little benefit to those who understand it as it is written.”

\* Cont. Cels., lib. vii. § 20, Opp. i. 708.

† Ezek. xx. 25.

‡ Ezek. xx. 11.

§ 2 Cor iii. 6. — This is a passage which, from the time of Origen to the present day, has been often so quoted as to pervert its meaning. The word *γράμμα*, incorrectly translated “ letter,” means “ what is written,” “ the written Law,” “ the Jewish Law.” St. Paul says, that he was not a minister of that Law, but of “ the Spirit,” or, in other words, of the spiritual blessings to be received through Christ ; “ for the written Law causes death [that is, to such as adhere to it in opposition to Christianity], but the Spirit gives life.” There is no reference to the distinction between the letter and the spirit of any particular writing.

|| Gal. v. 19.

The examples of the patriarchs, according to him, lead to dissoluteness, and the sacrifices of the Law to idolatry, if the history of the former, and the injunctions concerning the latter, are not supposed to have a further meaning than appears in the letter. "That the language of Scripture," he adds, "in its obvious sense, teaches hatred, is shown by this passage: *Wretched daughter of Babylon! Blessed be he who shall requite thee as thou hast treated us. Blessed be he who shall take thy little ones and dash them against the stones* ;\* and by this passage: *In the morning, I slew all the sinners of the land.*† And there are others of a similar kind, expressive of contention, rivalry, anger, strife, dissension; which vices the examples set before us in the history, if we do not look to their higher meaning, are more likely to produce than to restrain. Heresies, likewise, owe their existence rather to understanding the Scriptures carnally [literally] than, as many think, to the works of the flesh."‡ The last sentence shows the liberality of Origen. From this, as well as from passages before cited, § we perceive what he thought the main occasion of the heresy of the Gnostics, and consequently what he regarded as its essential characteristic, that is to say, their doctrine concerning the Jewish dispensation. All the passages quoted from him prove, likewise, that he agreed with the Gnostics in regarding the opinions of the Jews respecting their Scriptures as untenable, if these Scriptures were to be understood only in their obvious meaning. But, if the metaphor may be allowed, he thought that their difficulties were to be solved in the menstruum of allegorical interpretation, and that the essential meaning might thus be obtained in crystalline purity.

\* Psalm cxxxvii. 8, 9.

† Psalm ci. 8.

‡ Ex decimo Stromatum Origen. Lib. (apud Hieronymi Comment. in Ep. ad Galat., Opp. iv. pars 1, coll. 294, 295), Origenis Opp. tom. i. p. 41.

§ See pp. 295, 296

Among the Gnostics, Marcion, as I have said, rejected the allegorical mode of interpretation. Other Gnostics, particularly the Valentinians, allegorized at least as extravagantly as the fathers; but they were not disposed, like them, thus to do away the difficulties of the Jewish Scriptures. They, perhaps, felt more strongly the common dislike of the Gentiles to the Jews. They were not so ready to overcome the first unfavorable impressions which those books made upon their minds. Their faith as Christians was more imperfect; it was more implicated with their philosophical speculations; and they were not as solicitous as the catholic Christians to receive all which they supposed to be taught or implied in the New Testament. Their hypothesis respecting the Jewish dispensation, that it proceeded from an inferior divinity, was equally in accordance with the notions of the times, as the supposition that the books of the Jews were to be interpreted allegorically. By their theory, — by admitting the existence and acts of the God of the Jews, but denying him to be the Supreme Being, — they accounted, as they believed, for the otherwise inexplicable phenomena which those books presented; while the catholic Christians thought themselves enabled to escape the force of the objections founded on those phenomena, by the allegorical mode of interpretation, and the other expedients to which they had recourse.

It may appear, then, that the principal occasion of the existence of the Gnostics, that is, of proper Christian Gnostics, was the impossibility, as it seemed to them, of regarding the God of the Old Testament and the God of Christians as the same being. It is true, that their systems, as we shall see, were intended to give an account of the evil in the world. But, in having this object in view, they did not differ from the catholic Christians, nor from heathen philosophers. What characterizes them is their regarding the Jewish dispensation as an essential part of the evil and imperfection to be ac-



counted for, and the character and agency which they consequently assigned in their systems to the God of the Jews. They were constituted a peculiar class by being Christians who separated Judaism from Christianity. In the controversy with their catholic opponents, the strength of their cause evidently lay in their objections to the Old Testament. These they appear to have been most ready to bring forward in defending their systems. In them they had a vantage-ground above their opponents, and could become assailants in their turn. Such was the state of opinion and feeling in the early age when the Gnostics were most numerous and respectable, that we might reasonably suppose that a considerable number of individuals would embrace Christianity with more or less imperfect faith, who would not extend their belief so far as to acknowledge Judaism also as a dispensation from God.

The belief of the catholic Christians in the divine origin of Judaism was a genuine consequence of their Christian faith. But with this belief, as if the one thing were necessarily connected with the other, they went on to adopt, likewise, the opinions of the Jews concerning the divine authority of the books of the Old Testament. Those opinions were not, indeed, at once received by all Christians not Gnostics, as we have seen in the case of the author of the Clementine Homilies; but they soon obtained general reception. The belief of the divine authority of the Jewish books was even extended by the catholic Christians to embrace most of those which constitute the Apocrypha of our modern Bibles.

There are few phenomena in the history of opinions more remarkable than this reception of the Jewish notions concerning the Old Testament by the generality of the early Christians. The Jews had been regarded with aversion by other nations. The unbelieving Jews continued to be so by the Gentile Christians; and the believing Jews were an heretical

sect in little repute. The books of the Old Testament, though accessible to every Greek and Roman scholar through the medium of the Greek translation of them, the Septuagint, had heretofore been treated with contemptuous neglect. The Gentile Christians, by whom they were received as of divine authority, were, with very few exceptions, wholly unacquainted with their original language, and obliged to recur for its meaning to copies of the Septuagint or of other translations, the correctness of which was denied by their opponents, the unbelieving Jews. At the same time, they had a strong feeling of the objections to which the Pentateuch and other parts of the Old Testament are exposed, if understood in their obvious meaning, or, as they expressed it, in their *literal* sense; and notwithstanding the allegorical mode of interpretation, and the other expedients by which they escaped from these difficulties, they were reduced to straits, both in reconciling many passages to their own reason and moral sentiments, and in defending them against the attacks of Gnostics and unbelievers. Still they encumbered their cause, and gave great advantage to their opponents, by asserting the Jewish opinions concerning the character of those books, in consequence of the belief that the truth of Christianity implied, not merely the fact of the divine mission of Moses, but the truth of those Jewish opinions. The scholars and philosophers, — for scholars and philosophers they were, notwithstanding any modern prejudices to the contrary, — who during the first three centuries appear as Christian fathers, received from the Jews, with whom as a people they had no friendly intercourse, all their canonical books; regarding them as of divine origin, and ascribing to them equal authority with the records of Christianity. It must have been a powerfully operative cause which produced this result. It strikingly evinces the strength of evidence that accompanied our religion. Its proofs must have been overwhelming, when, in addition to establishing an invincible faith in the

religion itself, they occasioned, notwithstanding such obstacles, the adoption of the Jewish opinions respecting the Old Testament.

The fundamental difference, then, between the Gnostics and the catholic Christians consisted in their different views of Judaism, and of the author of the Jewish dispensation. But, like other speculatists of their day, the Gnostics formed for themselves a system of the universe, in which, answerably to the declarations of the Old Testament, he whom they regarded as the god of the Jews appears as the Creator of the physical world. Such a system necessarily embraced some solution, or rather some account, of the evil that exists; and this was partly found in the supposed character of the Creator, and partly in the evil nature ascribed to matter.

The topics treated of in this chapter naturally suggest the inquiry, In what manner should the Jewish dispensation and the books of the Old Testament be regarded? The views that have been given of the opinions of the early Christians, both Catholics and Gnostics, involve the whole subject in doubts and difficulties, of which no rational solution is afforded. But the Jewish is intimately connected with the Christian dispensation, and one may therefore reasonably be unwilling to dismiss the inquiry without some attempt to answer it. I have accordingly considered the subject elsewhere.\*

\* See the original edition of this work, vol. ii., Additional Note, D.

## CHAPTER VII.

### OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE GNOSTICS RECONCILED THEIR DOCTRINES WITH CHRISTIANITY.

IN comparing the peculiar doctrines of the Gnostics with the teaching of Christ, as recorded in the Gospels, or with the Christian Scriptures generally, the question naturally arises, How could they imagine those doctrines to have been taught by the Master whom they professed to follow, or identify them in any way with Christianity? We may, at first view, be inclined strongly to suspect that they held the common histories of Christ, and the other books of the New Testament, in no esteem; and to adopt the inference of Gibbon, that "it was impossible that the Gnostics could receive our present Gospels."\*

But, on further attention to the subject, we may perceive that there is nothing peculiar in the case of the Gnostics. Their systems have long been obsolete; they are foreign from our thoughts and imaginations; and, in comparing them with the systems of other sects, we are apt to measure their relative distance from Christianity by their relative distance from the forms of Christian belief with which we are familiar. Of opinions equally false, those with which we have long been acquainted seem to us much less extraordinary than such as are newly presented to our

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\* See p. 161.

minds. In inquiring, therefore, how the Gnostics could mistake their doctrines for the doctrines of Christianity, the first consideration to be attended to is the fact, that their mistake was not greater than that which has been committed by a large majority of the professed disciples of Christ. The faith of the whole Christian world for ten centuries before the Reformation had no advantage over that of the Gnostics, in being more accordant with reason and Christianity. The gross literal errors and absurdities, maintained by the Catholics of this period, are in as strong contrast with the truths of our religion, as the mystic extravagances of the early heretics. The system by which the Catholic faith was supplanted among Protestants, with its doctrines concerning the threefold personality of God, and concerning God's government of his creatures; with its representations of the totally depraved nature, capable only of moral evil, with which he brings men into being; with its scheme of redemption required by man's utter misery and helplessness; its infinite satisfaction to the justice of God the Father, made by the sufferings of God the Son; and its "horrible decrees,"\* — may perhaps appear, to a rational believer of the present day, to stand in as open and direct opposition to Christianity as the systems of the leading Gnostics. Or, to come down to a later period, the hypotheses and expositions by which the Gnostics reconciled their conceptions with the declarations of Christ and his apostles could not, as many will think, be more irrational and extravagant than the hypotheses and expositions of that modern school of German theologians, who, admitting the authenticity of the Gospels, find nothing supernatural in the

\* I borrow the expression from a well-known passage of Calvin. "*Unde factum est, ut tot gentes una cum liberis eorum infantibus æternæ morti involveret lapsus Adæ absque remedio, nisi quia Deo ita visum est? . . . Decretum quidem horribile fateor.*" — "Whence is it, that the fall of Adam involved so many nations, with their infant children, in eternal death, without remedy, except that it so seemed good to God? . . . It is a horrible decree, I confess." — *Institut.*, lib. iii. c. 23, § 7.

history, but explain, as conformable to the common laws of nature, events which, according to their theory, have, from the time of their occurrence to the present day, been *mistaken* for miracles. I refer to the opinions of large bodies of Christians, or of men claiming to be called Christians; and to speculations which have been defended by such as were, or have been reputed to be, learned and able. It is not necessary to pursue the illustration by adverting to the doctrines of smaller sects. I will only observe further, as the case seems to me particularly analogous, that the disciples of Swedenborg are believers in our religion, that they have their full share of the Christian virtues, and that they have reckoned among their number men of more than common powers of mind; while he who rejects the systems both of Ptolemy and of Swedenborg will probably think that there is no reason for preferring one to the other, on account of its being the more rational faith, or having a better foundation in the Gospels.

Whatever opinions a thinking man may entertain of Christianity, or of religion unconnected with Christianity, when he compares them with those which have existed, or are existing, among mankind, he will find himself in a small minority. Whoever may really have attained to the

“bene munita, . . .

“Edita doctrinâ sapientum, templa serena,” —

*to the serene temples, well fortified, built up by the learning of the wise, —*

“Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre

Errare atque viam palenteis quærere vitæ,” —

will assuredly not find them thronged; and, from their height, he will see not a few others wandering in errors as extravagant as those of the Gnostics.

Such have, for many centuries, been the doctrines of the larger portion of the professed followers of Christ, that faith has been formally disconnected from reason; and reason, or, as the term is usually qualified, *human* reason, has been represented as its dangerous enemy. From the time of the Gnostics to our own, there has always been a very numerous class, composed of individuals who have held different and opposite tenets, but who have all in common appealed, in some form or other, to an inward sense, a spiritual discernment, infallible in its perceptions, surpassing the powers of the understanding, and superseding their use. "The natural man," says St. Paul, meaning the unconverted, him who rejected revelation, "receives not the truths of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned;"\* that is to say, spiritual things, the truths taught by Christianity, are to be discerned only through the light which Christianity affords. But the words of the apostle were early perverted by the theosophic Gnostics;† and there are none that have been more commonly or more mischievously abused. One main occasion of the existence, not only of the Gnostics, but of other sects of religionists, has been the vanity of belonging to a spiritual aristocracy, from which good sense, learning, and rational piety only form a ground of exclusion. Those Gnostics, with their pretence to spiritual discernment, had no more difficulty than later sects in finding what they looked for in the teachings of Christ.

The ease with which different parties among Christians have discovered apparent support for doctrines the most irrational has been essentially connected with a fundamental error respecting the nature of those writings which compose the Old and New Testaments. All these writings, so different

\* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

† Irenæus, lib. i. c. 8, § 3, p. 39.

in character and value, have been represented as constituting the Revelation from God. They have been ascribed to God as their proper author; the human writers being considered only as agents under his immediate direction. When, therefore, all these different writers, with all their imperfect and erroneous conceptions, were thus transformed into infallible divine instructors, there is no wonder, that their words, even if correctly understood, should afford support for many errors. But, beside the direct consequence of this fundamental misapprehension, there has been an indirect consequence not less important. The words contained in the books of the Old and New Testaments being regarded as the words, not of men, but of God, the rational principles of interpretation, which would apply to them as the words of men, have been set aside. These principles would lead us to study the respective characters of the authors of those books, and the various influences which were acting upon them, and to make ourselves acquainted with the particular occasion and purpose of their different writings, and with the characters, circumstances, opinions, errors, and modes of expression of those for whom their writings were immediately intended; and when we had thus enabled ourselves, as far as possible, to sympathize with them, we should determine their meaning with a constant regard to the considerations which we had thus grouped together. But such knowledge is foreign from the purpose, if the books to be explained are not properly the works of human authors. It has, accordingly, been disregarded. The essential elements and rules of a correct interpretation have been neglected; and the work of explaining the Scriptures has been denied to reason and judgment, and delivered over to men's preconceptions, caprices, imaginations, and spiritual discernment. The consequence has been, that, in the performance of this work, we may find all varieties of error, from the wildest allegories and cabalistic follies, down to the imposition of verbal meanings which are verbal or moral



absurdities. The false modes of interpretation common in their day afforded the theosophic Gnostics, as false modes of interpretation have afforded later sects, a ready means of apparently reconciling their opinions with the Scriptures.

Every one acquainted with theological controversy must be familiar with the fact, that, in defending doctrines contrary to the teaching of Christ, a few texts are seized upon, the words of which, when standing alone, admit an interpretation favorable to those doctrines; and that their defenders, fixing their attention on these texts, are able to close their eyes to the whole opposing tenor of the New Testament. But the Gnostics could have been in no want of such texts as might readily be accommodated to the support of their fundamental doctrine, that the God of the Jews was not the God of Christians. Marcion wrote a work on this subject, which he entitled "Antitheses," the main object of which was to point out the contrariety between the representations given by Christ of his Father, and those given of God in the Old Testament.\* The opposition between Christianity and some of the views of religion and morals presented in the Pentateuch (which I have had occasion to remark) furnished the Gnostics with a storehouse of arguments from Scripture. As regards another principal point, the claim set up by the theosophic Gnostics to be by nature the chosen, or the elect, of God, as being *the spiritual*, they could have found no more difficulty in supporting their pretensions from the New Testament, than one of those who, since their day, have claimed to be elected as the spiritual through a decree of God, irrespective of any merits of their own. Similar modes of misinterpretation would apply as well in the one case as the other, and furnish a similar harvest of apparent proofs.

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\* Tertullian. advers. Marcion., lib. i. c. 19, p. 374; lib. iv. c. 1, p. 418, c. 6, p. 416.

After these general remarks, we will proceed to consider more particularly the means by which the Gnostics reconciled their doctrines with their Christian faith. The inquiry is one of particular interest, on account of the proof which it affords that the Gnostics had no other Gospel-history than that which was common to them with the catholic Christians and with ourselves; and that, together with the catholic Christians, they used some one, or all, of our present Gospels, as the only document or documents of any value respecting the ministry of Christ.

In the first place, then, the theosophic Gnostics, in common with the catholic Christians, applied the allegorical mode of interpretation to the New Testament. Neglecting the proper meaning of words, they educed from them mystical senses. Of these, I have already, in the course of this work, produced examples; and many more are given by their early opponents, particularly by Irenæus. This afforded a ready means of accommodating the language of the New Testament to their conceptions. But their whole system of interpretation was, besides, arbitrary, and unsupported by any correct principles. The vocabulary of the theosophic Gnostics, like that of other erring sects, consisted, in great part, of words from the New Testament, on which they had imposed new senses. The names of the *Æons* most frequently mentioned were borrowed from the New Testament; and, as the same name was applied by them to different individuals,—as the name of God, for example, was given both to the Gnostic Creator and to the Supreme Being, and that of Jesus both to the *Æon* so named and to the man Jesus,—it thus became easy for them, on the one hand, to find supposed references to their theory, and, on the other, to explain away much that was inconsistent with it.

Like other false expositors of Scripture, the Gnostics detached particular passages from their connection, and in-

fused a foreign meaning into the words. Irenæus, after saying that they appealed to unwritten tradition as a source of their knowledge, goes on to remark, that, "twisting, according to the proverb, a rope of sand, they endeavor to accommodate, in a plausible manner, to their doctrines the parables of the Lord, the declarations of the prophets, or the words of the apostles, so that their fiction may not seem to be without proof. But they neglect the order and connection of the Scriptures, and disjoin, as far as they are able, the members of the truth. They transpose and refashion, and, making one thing out of another, they deceive many by a fabricated show of the words of the Lord which they put together."\* The Gnostics, according to him, in thus putting together proofs from Scripture, resembled one who, taking a mosaic representing a king, should separate the stones, and then form them into the likeness of a dog or a fox.† He afterwards compares them to those who made centos from lines of Homer, by which some story was told altogether foreign from any thing in his works.‡ They allowed, he says, that the unknown God, and the transactions within the Pleroma, "were not plainly declared by the Saviour, because all had not capacity to receive such knowledge; but, to those who were able to understand them, they were signified by him mystically and in parables."§

In addition to these modes of interpretation, the theosophic Gnostics likewise maintained a principle similar to a fundamental doctrine of the Roman Catholics; namely, that religious truth could not be learned from the Scriptures alone, without the aid of the oral instructions of Christ and his apostles, as preserved by tradition. "When," says Irenæus,

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\* Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 8, § 1, p. 36. — For σοφία, in the last sentence, I adopt the reading, φαντασίη, or φαντάσματι. See Massuet's note.

† Ibid.

‡ Lib. i. c. 9, § 4, pp. 45, 46.

§ Lib. i. c. 3, § 1, p. 14; lib. ii. c. 10, § 1, p. 126; c. 27, § 2, p. 155.

"they are confuted by proofs from the Scriptures, they turn and accuse the Scriptures themselves, as if they were not correct, nor of authority; they say that they contain contradictions, and that the truth cannot be discovered from them by those who are ignorant of tradition. For that it was not delivered in writing, but orally; whence Paul said, '*We speak wisdom among the perfect, but not the wisdom of this world.*'"\* — "The heretics," says Tertullian, "pretend that the apostles did not reveal all things to all, but taught some doctrines openly to every one, some secretly, and to a few only."† What was peculiar in their own doctrines they regarded as that esoteric teaching which had come down to them by oral tradition.

Conformably to this, the Gnostics, in particular cases, pointed out certain individuals, supposed disciples of the apostles, from whom their leaders had received their systems. Thus, Valentinus was said to have been taught by Theodas, an acquaintance of Paul, and Basilides by Glaucias, a companion of Peter.‡ It would seem, likewise, from a single passage in Clement of Alexandria, that the Gnostics generally boasted that their opinions were favored by Matthias, § who was chosen an apostle in the place of Judas. || Though the remark is not made by Clement, yet it is evident that this appeal to the authority of a particular apostle — one of whom scarcely any thing is now known, and of whom it follows that scarcely any thing was known in the second century — proves that the Gnostics did not appeal with any confidence to the authority of the other apostles.

Irenæus earnestly opposes the doctrine of a secret oral tradition. ¶ But it was maintained by Clement as expressly and fully as by the Gnostics. It was altogether consistent

\* Lib. iii c 2, § 1, p 174.

† De Præscriptione Hæreticorum, cap. 25, p. 210.

‡ Clement. Al. Stromat., vii. § 17, p. 898.

§ Ibid., p 900.

|| Acts i. 26.

¶ Cont. Hæres., lib. iii. capp 2-4, pp. 174-170.

with his conceptions, that the more recondite truths of philosophy were to be exhibited under a veil, and not to be communicated to the generality. This higher knowledge, the philosophy of Christianity, to which he gave the same name (*γνῶσις*) which the Gnostics gave to their speculations, he supposed was to be attained only by those who were in his view *true* Gnostics (*γνωστικοί*), that is, truly enlightened. The greater number of Christians had only simple faith,—faith in the essential truths of Christianity, which was sufficient for them. On this faith, as its foundation, all higher knowledge rested.\* It was the notion of Clement, that the secret wisdom of which he speaks was first communicated by our Lord to Peter, James, John, and Paul, from whom it had been transmitted.† “Our Lord,” he says, “did not at once reveal to many those truths which did not belong to many; but he revealed them to a few to whom he knew them to be adapted, who were capable of receiving them, and of being conformed to them. But secret things, as God [meaning, I conceive, philosophical speculations concerning God], are committed, not to writing, but to oral discourses.”‡

This notion of a *secret* tradition is not found in Justin Martyr, Irenæus, or Tertullian. When the two latter speak of tradition, they mean that traditionary knowledge of the history and doctrines of Christianity which necessarily existed among Christians. It is described by Irenæus as a “tradition manifest throughout the world, and to be found in every church.”§ By it, he says, a knowledge of our religion was preserved without books among believers in barbarous nations.|| At the end of about a century from the preaching of the apostles, there must have been, throughout the com-

\* See, among many passages to this effect, *Stromat.*, vii. pp. 800, 891.

† *Stromat.*, i. p. 322. Etiam apud Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.*, lib. ii. c. 1.

‡ *Stromat.*, i. p. 323.

§ *Lib.* iii. c. 3, § 1, p. 175.

|| *Ibid.*, c. 4, § 2, p. 178.

munities which they had formed, a general acquaintance with what they had taught, even had no written records of our religion been extant. In regard, likewise, to facts important in their reference to Christianity, — as, for example, the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, — the Christians of the last half of the second century must have relied on the testimony of their predecessors. It is this traditionary knowledge concerning Christianity, not secret, but open to all, which Irenæus and Tertullian appeal to, with justifiable confidence, in their reasonings against the heretics, when they distinguish between the evidence from tradition and the evidence from Scripture. The tradition of which they speak is altogether different from the *secret* tradition of Clement.

The origin of the opinion common to Clement and to the theosophic Gnostics may be explained by the supposition, that inferences, true or false, from the truths taught by Christ and his apostles, and theories built on those truths, were conceived of, and represented, as having been taught by them; and, since it did not appear that they made a part of their public teaching, the notion in consequence grew up, that they were taught by them privately. This notion would ally itself with the conceptions of both Clement and the Gnostics concerning that higher esoteric wisdom which few only were capable of receiving. In holding their common belief, it is probable that neither had a distinct conception of what was embraced in the tradition the existence of which they asserted. It appears from the whole tenor of the *Stromata* of Clement, that, in his view, the true knowledge, which, in union with accordant virtues, constituted an enlightened Christian (*his* Gnostic), in the highest sense of the words, comprehended the whole compass of intellectual philosophy, and particularly all that can be known by men respecting the nature, attributes, and operations of God.\* If he had been

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\* Instead of producing at length the authorities and reasons for this

asked, whether he believed that all this knowledge had been handed down by a secret tradition, the question might have presented the subject to his mind under a new aspect, but he undoubtedly would have answered in the negative. Had he then been requested to point out what particular part of it he conceived to have been thus handed down, I think he would have been embarrassed by the inquiry.

In connection with their notion of a secret tradition, the Gnostics, or some of the Gnostics, said, according to Irenæus,

statement, which would carry us too far away from our main purpose, I will quote a few sentences from the valuable work of the present Bishop of Lincoln (Dr. Kaye), entitled "Some Account of the Writings and Opinions of Clement of Alexandria." It is the most important work on the subject of which it treats. The author says (pp 238-241):—

"By *γνῶσις* [the higher esoteric knowledge] Clement understood the perfect knowledge of all that relates to God, his nature and dispensations. . . . The Gnostic [Clement's Gnostic] comprehends not only the First Cause and the Cause begotten by him [the Logos], and is fixed in his notions concerning them, possessing firm and immovable reasons; but also, having learned from the truth itself, he possesses the most accurate truth from the foundation of the world to the end, concerning good and evil, and the whole creation, and, in a word, concerning all which the Lord spake . . . With respect to the source from which this knowledge is derived, Clement says, that 'it was imparted by Christ to Peter, James, John, and Paul, and by them delivered down to their successors in the Church. It was not designed for the multitude, but communicated to those only who were capable of receiving it; orally, not by writing.'"

The notions of Clement respecting this sacred tradition are not only to be distinguished from the reasonable conceptions of other fathers respecting that public traditionary knowledge concerning Christianity which necessarily existed among Christians, but equally also from an opinion which began to prevail in the latter half of the fourth century, and which has become fundamental in the Roman-Catholic Church. This opinion is, that certain doctrines and rites, which are not to be kept secret, but are to be made known to all, and to be believed or practised by all, are not expressly taught or enjoined in the New Testament, but are derived from the oral teaching or the appointment of Christ or his apostles, a knowledge of which has been preserved by tradition. This principle was, perhaps, first clearly avowed by Basil of Caesarea, in the latter half of the fourth century, in his treatise, "Concerning the Holy Spirit."

“that the apostles, practising dissimulation, accommodated their doctrine to the capacity of their hearers, and their answers to the previous conceptions of those who questioned them, talking blindly with the blind, weakly with the weak, and conformably to their error with those who were in error; and that thus they preached the Creator to those who thought that the Creator was the only God, but to those able to comprehend the unknown Father they communicated this unspeakable mystery in parables and enigmas.”\* — “Some,” says Irenæus, “impudently contend, that the apostles, preaching among the Jews, could not announce any other God but him in whom the Jews had believed.”†

Again: some of the Gnostics, especially the Marcionites, maintained that Paul was far superior to the other apostles in the knowledge of the truth; “the hidden doctrine having been manifested to him by revelation.”‡ They represented the other apostles as having been entangled by Jewish prejudices, from which he was in a great measure free. Hence Tertullian, in one place, calls him “the Apostle of the Heretics.”§ In support of this opinion, Marcion relied much on that passage in the Epistle to the Galatians|| in which Paul represents himself as having reproved Peter and Barnabas for not acting conformably to the principles of Christianity, but by their conduct “compelling the Gentiles to Judaize,” that is, to observe the Levitical Law.¶ Marcion regarded the Gospels as expressing the false Jewish opinions of their writers. But among the Gospels he conceived that there was ground for making a choice; and he selected, for his own use and that of his followers, the Gospel of Luke, the

\* Lib. iii. cap. 5, § 1, p. 179.

† Ibid., cap. 12, § 6, p. 195.

‡ Ibid., c. 13, § 1, p. 200.

§ Advers. Marcion., lib. iii. c. 5, p. 399.

|| Chap. ii. 11, seqq.

¶ Advers. Marcion., lib. iv. c. 3, pp. 414, 415; lib. i. c. 20, p. 375: conf. De Præscript. Hæretic., c. 23, p. 210.



companion of Paul. This he further adapted to his purpose by rejecting from it what he viewed as conformed to those opinions. Nor did he consider Paul himself as wholly free from Jewish errors, but likewise struck out, from those of his Epistles which he used, the passages in which he thought them to be expressed.

Sometimes, according to Irenæus, the Gnostics, apparently without making an exception in favor of St. Paul, charged the apostles generally with Jewish errors and ignorance concerning the higher truths and mysteries of religion. "All those," he says, "who hold pernicious doctrines, have departed in their faith from Him who is God, and think that they have found out more than the apostles, having discovered another God. They think that the apostles preached the Gospel while yet under the influence of Jewish prejudices, but that their own faith is purer, and that they are wiser than the apostles." He states that Marcion proceeded on these principles in rejecting the use of some of the books of Scripture, and of portions of those which he retained.\* "The heretics," says Tertullian, "are accustomed to affirm that the apostles did not know all things; while at other times, under the influence of the same madness, they turn about, and maintain, that the apostles did indeed know all things, but did not teach all things to all."† — "I cannot help wondering," says Clement of Alexandria, "how some dare to call themselves perfect, and Gnostics, thinking themselves superior to the apostles."‡ But the theosophic Gnostics did not stop here. Irenæus, after saying that the heretics, when confuted from the Scriptures, appealed to oral tradition, goes on thus: "But when we, on the other hand, appeal to that tradition which, proceeding from the apostles, has been preserved in the Church by a succession of elders, then they oppose tradition,

\* Lib. iii c. 12, § 12, p. 198. † De Præscript Hæretic., c. 22, p. 209.

‡ Pædagogus, lib. i. c. 6, pp. 128, 129.

saying that they, being not only wiser than the elders, but wiser than the apostles, have discovered the pure truth. For the apostles, they say, mixed their legal notions with the words of the Saviour; and not only the apostles, but the Lord himself, spoke sometimes from the Creator [as the Messiah of the Creator], sometimes from the Middle Space [that is, conformably to the spiritual nature which he had derived from Achamoth], and sometimes from the highest height [as the *Æon Christ* from the Pleroma];\* but that they themselves know with full assurance the hidden mystery, unmixed, in all its purity."† The opinion of the Gnostics, here expressed, concerning the discourses of Christ, is analogous to the Orthodox doctrine, still extant, that he spoke sometimes as a man, sometimes as God, and sometimes in his mediatorial character, as neither God nor man simply, but as both united; and that, as a man, he was ignorant of what, being God, he knew.

There is nothing to object to the general proposition of the Gnostics, that the apostles were under the influence of Jewish prejudices, nor to the proof which they brought of this fact from the conduct of Peter and Barnabas, which was reproved by Paul. Their extravagance consisted in the irrational misapplication which they made of this principle. The spirit of God, which enlightened the minds of the apostles as to all essential truths of religion, did not deliver them

\* According to the verbal construction of the old Latin Translation of Irenæus, which is here our authority, and which I have followed in my translation, though not in my exposition, these clauses apply equally to the apostles as to Christ. But I cannot think that this meaning was *intended* by Irenæus, or, at least, that this was the meaning of the Gnostics. Irenæus elsewhere (lib. i. c. 7, § 3, p. 34) gives a similar account of their opinions respecting the preaching of Christ, without mentioning the apostles. Nor is there any probability that the Gnostics believed in the *inspiration* of men from the Pleroma, which opinion would be implied in the supposition that the apostles sometimes spoke "from the highest height."

† Lib. iii. c. 2, § 2, p. 175

from all error, and transform them into all-wise and all knowing philosophers. But, if the apostles were liable to any errors, they were particularly exposed to the influence of those in which they had been educated, and could hardly escape being more or less affected by the inveterate conceptions and errors of their countrymen. It being the object of the Gnostics to separate Judaism from Christianity, and to distinguish the God of the Jews from the God of Christians, they naturally seized upon this truth to effect their purpose; and as no strongly marked line can be drawn, defining the sphere within which alone the apostles were liable to error, they applied, or rather misapplied, a principle, correct in itself, to all cases in which the words of the apostles so explicitly contradicted their doctrine, as to be incapable, by any force, of being conformed to it.

It remains to add a few words concerning the belief of the theosophic Gnostics in their own infallible spiritual knowledge. This they conceived of as the result of their spiritual nature. "They object to us," says Clement of Alexandria, "that we are of another nature, and unable to comprehend their peculiar doctrines."\* A similar pretension to that of the Gnostics has been common among Christians. An essential doctrine of the Roman-Catholic Church is its own infallibility, — an infallibility which must reside in some of its individual members. Among the sects into which Protestants have been divided, the generality have, at least in the earlier stages of their growth, maintained the principle, expressed in the perverted language of St. Paul, that *spiritual things are spiritually discerned*, and have, of course confined this unerring spiritual discernment to themselves. Calvin taught that "the first step in the school of the Lord is to renounce human reason.† For, as if a veil were inter-

\* Stromat., vii § 16, pp. 891, 892.

† "Humana perspicacia."

posed, it hinders us from attaining to the mysteries of God, which are not revealed but to little children ;”\* and, after these words, he proceeds to quote, as might be expected, the often-quoted passage of St. Paul just referred to. Even the genuineness and inspiration of the books of the Bible, or, as he expresses it, the fact that they “had proceeded from the very mouth of God” (*ab ipsissimo Dei ore fluxisse*), “were not to be submitted to reasoning and arguments,” but were spiritually discerned ; so as to be known with the same certainty as men know that black is not white, and sweet is not bitter.”† The theosophic Gnostics, in expressing their sense of the incapacity of common Christians to understand their doctrines, could not have used stronger language than that of Calvin concerning the natural blindness of the unregenerate to the truths of religion. It was, in his view, the spiritual illumination of the elect which enabled them clearly to discern these truths ; or, in other words, clearly to discern the identity of the system which he taught with the teachings of Christ.

The Gnostics, as we have seen, were equally able with Calvin to identify their systems with Christianity. In the modes by which they effected their purpose, we may observe the same operations of the human mind as have been going on from their day to our own. One of the most effectual means of checking their further progress is, by directing attention to the extravagances to which they lead. It is a main advantage resulting from the study of obsolete errors, and one which this study alone can furnish, that, as we have no prejudices in their favor, we are able, without disturbance, to trace them to their sources ; and when those sources are discovered, we may perceive that they are still in full action producing new errors, or more commonly, perhaps, repro-

\* Institut, lib. iii. c. 2, § 34

† Ibid., lib. i. c. 7.

ducing old ones under a new form. It may be doubted, whether a History of Human Folly would not be a more instructive work than our Histories of Philosophy; but its contents would not be throughout so different from theirs as its different title might lead one to expect.

Among the Gospels, the Marcionites used only their copy of that of Luke. To this they joined ten Epistles of St. Paul, from which, as from the Gospel, they rejected certain passages, as I have before mentioned. On this history of Christ, and on these Epistles, they founded their system, and from them they reasoned. They appealed to them as freely and confidently as did the catholic Christians, and the theosophic Gnostics, to the books of the New Testament in general. The arguments which they drew from them are presented to view in the writings of their opponents, especially of Tertulian. From those books they derived their knowledge of Christ and of Christianity. It does not appear that they made a pretence to any exclusive spiritual discernment, or that they relied on any secret tradition. It does appear that they made no use of any other history of Christ besides the Gospel of Luke. No apocryphal gospel is said to have been extant among them. They are never charged with having rested their system, wholly or in part, on any such gospel. But, had there been ground for the charge, it would undoubtedly have been made. The controversy between them and the catholic Christians would have brought out such a fact with the broadest distinctness. It would have been, to say the least, as much insisted upon as the fact that they struck out some passages from the Gospel of Luke and the Epistles of Paul, notices of which are continually recurring in the writings of their opponents. Those passages the Marcionites rejected, and they disavowed the authority of the other three Gospels,—not on the ground that they were not genuine, but because, believing them to be genuine, they believed

their authors to be under the influence of Jewish prejudices.

But were those which have been mentioned the only means that the Gnostics made use of to find support for their systems in the real or supposed teaching of Christ? Had they not, as has been imagined, gospels of their own, presenting a view of his ministry and instructions, different from that contained in the catholic gospels;—accounts of Christ, which they preferred and opposed to those given by the evangelists? Every one has heard of apocryphal and Gnostic gospels.

As regards the Marcionites, these questions have been answered. It is evident that they had no such gospels or gospel. Those theosophic Gnostics, who adopted the means that have been explained of reconciling their doctrines with Christianity, could, likewise, have had no such gospels. It has appeared, not only in the present chapter, but throughout this work, that their systems, equally with the faith of the catholic Christians, were founded on the common account of Christ's ministry. In their reasonings, they constantly referred to the Gospels. They therefore could have received as of authority no history of his ministry which varied essentially from those Gospels. Whether they had any other histories of his ministry, which did not vary essentially from the Gospels, is an unimportant question, so far as it regards the main purpose which we have in view. For, if those histories proceeded from authors who wrote from independent sources of information, they would serve, by their agreement, to confirm the accounts of the catholic Gospels; while, if they were merely founded on those Gospels, or on some one of them, they would serve to show the authority which the latter had very early attained.

But a question may be virtually settled without all the explanation having been given which is necessary to our

satisfaction, and to a full understanding of the subject. After all that has appeared, the inquiry may still recur, What, then, were those apocryphal and Gnostic gospels about which so much has been said? To this inquiry I propose to give an answer in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE QUESTION, WHETHER THE Gnostics OPPOSED TO THE FOUR GOSPELS ANY OTHER WRITTEN HISTORIES OR HISTORY OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY.

THIS question will lead us to consider all those books that have been called *apocryphal gospels* which we have any reason for supposing to have been extant during the first two centuries, except the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of Marcion. We examine elsewhere the grounds for believing that the former, as it was first used by the Hebrew Christians, was the Hebrew original of the Gospel of Matthew, though its text, in some or many copies, may have afterwards become much corrupted.\* The latter was merely the Gospel of Luke mutilated by Marcion.† The authority of neither of these books, therefore, could be opposed to that of the catholic Gospels; nor can the epithet *apocryphal*, with its common associations, be properly applied to them. No book which was not in existence till after the end of the second century, could have been used by the Gnostics as a basis for their opinions, or could, by any sect whatever, have been brought into competition with the four Gospels, as an original history of Christ's ministry. All that is necessary to be said in direct reply to the question proposed lies within a

\* See Note A., section iv.

† See Additional Note, C, in vol. iii. of the former editions of the *Genuineness of the Gospels*: "On the Gospel of Marcion."



small compass. But the subject of apocryphal gospels, as well as that of apocryphal books in general, has been treated in such a manner as necessarily to produce confused and erroneous conceptions respecting them. It is a subject which demands explanation, where argument is not needed; and the inquiry on which we are about to enter will, through its incidental relations, extend much beyond the second century, and embrace books which were not extant till long after that period.\*

\* In respect to the apocryphal gospels, the modern writer, whose information is principally relied on, is Fabricius. In his "*Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*," he has given a full and accurate account of all the passages relating to them which are to be found in ancient writers. I say, "a full and accurate account;" because his work has now sustained that reputation unquestioned for more than a century. Fabricius, however, has merely brought together a mass of materials, without applying them to the illustration of any fact whatever. He has not arranged the books which he treats of chronologically, with reference to the period when they are first mentioned, or when they may be supposed to have appeared. Such an arrangement would at once show, that far the greater number deserve no consideration from any supposable bearing on the authority of the Gospels. He has arranged them in the alphabetical order of their titles, which tends to produce the impression, that they all equally deserve attention.

Fabricius was followed by Jones in the first two volumes of his "*New and Full Method of settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament*." But the principal value of Jones's work consists in its giving, in an English dress, the information to be found in Fabricius, and in the republication of some of the later apocryphal writings (also published by Fabricius) with English translations. He had no clear comprehension of his own purpose in writing; and his views and reasonings only tend to perplex the subject. He follows Fabricius in arranging the books in the alphabetical order of their titles.

In 1832, J. C. Thilo published the first volume of his "*Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*," a work commenced on an extensive plan, but of which no other portion has appeared. The first volume contains the later apocryphal writings, which had previously been published, with others in addition, — all apparently edited in a careful and thorough manner, with Prolegomena and notes. It contains also the Gospel of Luke used by Marcion, as restored by Hahn, who has made Marcion's Gospel a particular subject of study.

I shall refer to the three works which I have mentioned, by the names of their respective authors. The copy of Fabricius which I use is of the second

I begin by stating the most important considerations respecting the question proposed ; and I hope to be excused for some repetition in hereafter recalling attention to them with reference to different writings.

Of the controversy carried on by the catholic Christians with the Valentinians and the Marcionites, we have, as has been seen, abundant remains. The opinions and arguments of those heretics are brought forward in order to be confuted ; and though we may not regard them as fully and fairly stated, yet, on the other hand, it cannot be supposed that any striking peculiarity in their opinions, or any main topic of their reasoning, has been passed over in silence. If they had opposed other histories of Christ to the four Gospels, if they had relied for the support of their systems on accounts of his ministry different from those we now possess, we should find frequent notices of the fact. If they and the catholic Christians had been at issue on the question, which among discordant histories of Christ was to be received as authentic, this would necessarily have been the main point in controversy, the question to be settled before all others. We find in the case of the Marcionites, that their confining themselves to the use of a mutilated copy of Luke's Gospel is a circumstance continually presented to view ; and we have particular notices of the use which other heretics made of a few passages relating to Christ, not found in the evangelists. The fathers were eager to urge against the Gnostics the charges of corrupting and contemning the Scriptures, and of fabricating apocryphal writings. Had there been occasion to make it, they would not have passed over what in their view would have been a far graver allegation, that the Gnostics pretended to set up other histories of Christ in opposition to those re-

ceived by the great body of Christians. Such a fact, from its very nature, neither would nor could have remained unnoticed. Ample evidence of it must have come down to us; and, if no evidence is to be found, we may conclude without hesitation, that the Gnostics made no pretence to having more authentic histories of Christ than the Gospels.

What, then, is the state of the case? I answer, in the first place, that Irenæus and Tertullian were the two principal writers against the Gnostics, and from their works it does not appear that the Valentinians, the Marcionites, or any other Gnostic sect, adduced, in support of their opinions, a single narrative relating to the public ministry of Christ, besides what is found in the Gospels. It does not appear that they ascribed to him a single sentence of any imaginable importance, which the evangelists have not transmitted. It does not appear that any sect appealed to the authority of any history of his public ministry, besides the Gospels, except so far as the Marcionites, in their use of an imperfect copy of St. Luke's Gospel, may be regarded as forming a verbal exception to this remark. The question, then, which we have proposed for consideration, would seem to be settled. The Gnostics did not oppose any other history of Christ to the catholic Gospels. Had they done so, it is altogether incredible that the fact should not have been conspicuous throughout the controversial writings of Irenæus and Tertullian.

But what, then, were those ancient books which have been called "apocryphal gospels"? I answer, that, with the exception of the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of Marcion, and a narrative which Tatian formed out of the four evangelists, it is not probable that any one of them was a professed history of Christ's ministry. The main evidence of this fact will appear from a particular examination of the accounts which have been given of them. But it may be here observed, that the name "gospel," signifying in its primary meaning "a

joyful message," "glad news," was given as a title to the works of the evangelists, because they contained an account of the joyful message which Christ gave from heaven to men. It but indirectly denoted their character as histories of his ministry. The name "gospel" has ever been used to signify the whole scheme of Christianity; and a book, containing the views of its writer concerning this system, or the views ascribed by him to a particular apostle, might hence be entitled his gospel, or denominated by him the gospel of that apostle. There was a book in common use among the Manichæans, called a gospel, which, as Cyril of Jerusalem expressly mentions, contained no account of the actions of Christ.\* In later times, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, a book was published by Dr. Arthur Bury, which he entitled "The Naked Gospel." Another work appeared about the same time in Germany, which was called "The Eternal Gospel;" and another with the same title was produced in the thirteenth century.† It is not improbable, likewise, that the fathers may have used the term "gospel" in the same way in which it has been used by controvertists in modern times, when they have charged their opponents with teaching "another gospel." There is a French book entitled "The New Gospel of Cardinal Pallavicini, revealed by him in his History of the Council of Trent;" ‡ Scioppius, in one of his letters, talks of "the fifth gospel of Luther;" § and the Jesuit René Rapin published against the Jansenists a work which he called "The Gospel of the Jansenists." || Thus in ancient times the charge of teaching a new gospel might occasion the title "gospel" to be given to some book by which it was not assumed; or even lead to the false

\* It is ascribed by him to Scythianus as its author. *Cataphesis*, vi. § 13, p. 92.

† Fabricius, i. 337\*, 338.

‡ Ibid., i. 339, note.

§ La Roche's *Memoirs of Literature*, vol. ii. p. 252.

|| Fabricius, i. 389, note.

supposition, that there was some book which bore that title, or to which it might be applied, when no such book existed. Among what have been called the Gnostic gospels, we find, as I have formerly mentioned, one under the name of "The Gospel of Eve," probably used by the Ophians, which professed to contain that wisdom which Eve learned from the Serpent. This gospel, therefore, was not a history of the ministry of Christ.\* Nor can we reasonably suppose that this character was ascribed to another, said to be in use among the Cainites, called "The Gospel of Judas," meaning Judas Iscariot.† Epiphanius mentions a book as in use among Gnostics, which he says was named "The Gospel of Perfection."‡ Its title, and the brief account which he gives of it, imply that it was not an historical book, if indeed any such book existed. These remarks are merely preliminary. As we proceed, I trust it will appear that there is no ground for believing that any work which may properly be called a Gnostic gospel was a professed history of Christ's ministry, or that any history of his ministry was in circulation during the second century, among either the catholic Christians or the Gnostics, besides the catholic Gospels, and books, like those of Marcion and Tatian, founded upon one or all of them.

With this understanding of what might be meant by the title "gospel," let us next inquire what we may find respecting Gnostic or apocryphal gospels in Irenæus and Tertullian.

Tertullian often mentions the mutilated copy of Luke's Gospel used by the Marcionites. But this, as I have said, should not be spoken of as an apocryphal gospel. He no-

\* See p. 270, seqq.

† Irenæus, lib. i c. 31, § 1, p. 112.

‡ Hæres, xxvi. § 2, p. 83.

where, throughout his writings, ascribes to the Gnostics the use of any proper Gnostic gospel, in any sense of the term "gospel." He nowhere speaks of any apocryphal gospel whatever, or intimates a knowledge of the existence of such a book. The conclusion is unavoidable. Either he did not know of the existence of any such book, or, if he did, he regarded it as too obscure and unimportant to deserve notice. But neither could have been the case in respect to any book which the Gnostics brought into competition with the Gospels.

Once, and once only, Irenæus speaks of what he calls a "gospel," as used by the Valentinians, in addition to the four Gospels. He thus expresses himself concerning it: "The followers of Valentinus, throwing aside all fear, and bringing forward their own compositions, boast that they have more gospels than there are. For they have proceeded to such boldness as to entitle a book not long since written by them 'The True Gospel,' [*verbally* "The Gospel of the Truth,"] a book which agrees in no respect with the Gospels of the apostles, so that not even the Gospel can exist among them without blasphemy. For if that which is brought forward by them be the true Gospel, but differ at the same time from those Gospels which have been handed down to us by the apostles (those who wish may learn in what manner from the writings themselves), then it is evident that the Gospel handed down by the apostles is not the true Gospel." \*

The author of the Addition to Tertullian, probably copy-

\* "Si enim quod ab us profertur veritatis est Evangelium, dissimile est autem hoc illis [sc. Evangelus] quæ ab Apostolis nobis tradita sunt; (qui volunt possunt discere quemadmodum ex ipsis scripturis:) ostenditur jam non esse id quod ab Apostolis traditum est veritatis Evangelium." — Lib. iii. c. 11, § 9, p. 192. This difficult passage may, perhaps, be thus arranged with a change of pointing, a parenthesis, and the printing of *scripturis* without an initial capital. But no difference of arrangement or translation is important as regards the present subject.

ing Irenæus, says, "Valentinus likewise has his gospel besides ours."\* By Valentinus is here, I presume, meant the Valentinians; sects being not unfrequently by the fathers thus designated from their leaders. These are the only notices to be found of the Valentinians, as a sect, having used any other book called a gospel besides the canonical Gospels.

It is evident from the passage of Irenæus, as well as from much other equally unequivocal testimony, that the Valentinians received the four Gospels in common use. The charge against them is, that they had more gospels than the catholic Christians, that is, one more. This additional gospel, therefore, could have contained no history of Christ's ministry at variance with that in the four Gospels, which they also admitted. But (if such a gospel existed) there is no probability that it was an historical book of any sort. It was a gospel, we may reasonably presume, of the kind before described, containing an account of what its author believed to be the doctrines of the Gospel. If it had been a history presenting any additions to the narratives of the evangelists, adopted by the Valentinians to support their opinions, they would have quoted it for this purpose; and of the additional accounts, and of the arguments founded upon them, we should have had abundant notices in the writings of their opponents, and in the fragments still extant of their own. But there are no such notices whatever.

Such is the state of the case, if the Valentinians really had among them a book with the title supposed. But, though the account of Irenæus, so far as it relates to the existence of the book, may be correct, there is reason for doubting it altogether. If he has fallen into a mistake, it is one that may easily be explained. The Valentinians, we may suppose, professed that they alone had "the true Gospel," meaning that they alone held the true doctrines of the Gospel; and some

\* De Præscript. Hæretic., c. 49, p. 222.

of their opponents misunderstood them as meaning that they possessed a book with that title. Had they really, as Irenæus says, boasted of possessing such a gospel, it must have been an important book in reference to the exposition of their doctrines. But, as I have said, it is nowhere referred to by Irenæus himself, except in the passage just quoted. It is mentioned by no subsequent writer except the author of the Addition to Tertullian, who probably took his notice of it from Irenæus. Tertullian himself, who was well acquainted with the works of Irenæus, affords proof, by his silence concerning it in his writings against the Valentinians, that he was not aware of its existence, or regarded it as not worth notice. It follows, therefore, either that Irenæus was in error in supposing that there was such a book, or that he was in error in supposing that the Valentinians, generally, attached any importance to it.

Irenæus gives one other title (before mentioned), purporting to be that of an apocryphal gospel which he supposed to be in existence, and to be called "The Gospel of Judas," that is, of Judas Iscariot. He represents it as having been used by the Cainites. According to him, these heretics were distinguished by their abominable immorality, by their degrading the character of the Creator, and by their celebrating such personages in the Old Testament as Cain, Esau, Korah, and the Sodomites. They regarded them as allied to themselves by the possession of the same spiritual nature, and as having been, on account of this nature, persecuted by the Creator. They apparently considered Cain as the head of the spiritual among men. He was from "the higher power" (*a superiore principitate*). The truth, on these subjects, they said, was known to Judas alone; and in consequence of this knowledge, "he performed the mystery of delivering up his master; and thus through Judas all things earthly and heavenly [all the works of the Creator] were dissolved.



And they produce," adds Irenæus, "a fabrication to this effect, calling it 'The Gospel of Judas.'"\* The account of Irenæus is repeated by Epiphanius and Theodoret.

If there were such a book as Irenæus names, there is no ground for believing it to have been a fabricated history of Christ's ministry. But it is highly improbable that any sect or any book existed, such as Irenæus describes. It is a moral absurdity to suppose that there was a Christian sect which held such doctrines, and were guilty of such vices, as he imputes to the Cainites; that there were Christians avowing Cain to be their spiritual head, claiming alliance with the Sodomites, and taking Judas for their religious teacher. Nor would there be much less absurdity in imagining that any pseudo-Christian Gnostics exposed themselves in this barefaced manner to infamy and detestation; that they claimed to be on a level with the worst characters in the Old and New Testaments, and avowed doctrines at once so monstrous, and so intimately connected with Judaism and Christianity. Without supposing the existence of any such sect, it is not difficult to explain the origin of the stories concerning it, in connection with the origin of the name. We have good reason to think that the name "Nicolaitans" was derived from passages in the New Testament; and especially from two in the Apocalypse, in which it is applied to those who, having professed themselves Christians, indulged in licentiousness.† That of "Cainites," we may suppose, was derived from a passage (formerly quoted) in the Epistle of Jude, in which certain individuals are thus spoken of: "Woe for them! for they have walked in the way of Cain, and given themselves up to deceive, like Balaam, for pay, and brought destruction on themselves through rebellion, like Korah."‡ The name was applied to those otherwise called

\* Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 31, pp. 112, 113.

† See pp. 252, 253.

‡ Jude, ver. 11. — See p. 252.

Nicolaïtans, as we are informed by Tertullian in the only passage in which he mentions it.\* But there was probably still another occasion of its use. The theosophic Gnostics considered Seth as the representative and head of the spiritual among men, and, in consequence, appear to have sometimes given themselves the name of Sethians.† But the assumption of this name might naturally provoke the more angry among their opponents to apply the opposite name of Cainites to those Gnostics, at least, whom they regarded as guilty of gross vices. The name being given, a system of doctrines corresponding to it would be easily fabricated, out of exaggerations, misconceptions, and false reports; and one may find little difficulty in supposing that the assertion, that those to whom it was applied were traitors to Christ, teaching not his gospel, but the gospel of Judas Iscariot, gave occasion to the notion that they had a book with that title. If there were no sect holding the doctrines imputed to the Cainites, there was no gospel in existence conformed to those doctrines. Should it, however, still be thought that there may have been such a book, it is to be recollected that it must have been a book not used by Christians, of no authority, and, as appears from the little attention it received, of no notoriety.

Such is all the information concerning Gnostic or apocryphal gospels afforded by the two principal writers against the Gnostics. Tertullian, throughout his works, mentions no such gospel. Irenæus gives two titles supposed by him to belong to such books. But it is very improbable that there was any such book as "The Gospel of Judas." The existence of "The True Gospel," also, is doubtful. But, if there

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\* Tertullian, after referring to the Nicolaïtans mentioned in the Apocalypse, says: "Sunt et nunc alii Nicolaïtæ; Caiiana hæresis dicitur." — *De Præscript Hæretic.*, c 33, p 214.

† See p. 174, note; and p. 288.

were a book bearing that title, we cannot reasonably suppose it to have been a history of Christ's ministry at variance with the four Gospels.

The Valentinians and Marcionites were the two principal sects of the Gnostics, and probably comprehended far the greater part of their number. Excepting the story of Irenæus concerning "The True Gospel," there is no charge against either sect, that they appealed to apocryphal gospels; unless that name be given to Marcion's defective copy of Luke's Gospel. Next to those two sects, the Basilidians appear, for some reason or other, to have been regarded as the most important; and we will now attend to what is said of their use of an apocryphal gospel.

Of any work called a "gospel," different from the four Gospels, which was in use among the Basilidians, there is no mention in Irenæus or in Clement of Alexandria, who are the principal sources of all the information concerning them to which any credit can be attached. Nor is such a work mentioned by Epiphanius, who in general brought together all that he could find, true or false, to the prejudice of the heretics; nor by Eusebius, among the apocryphal writings which he enumerates; nor by Theodoret, who compiled his accounts of the heretics from many earlier authors. Such a book is first named by the author of the Homilies on Luke, which have been ascribed to Origen. That writer speaks of it in a passage in which he gives the titles, real or supposed, of various apocryphal gospels, to be hereafter noticed. He is commenting on the words with which Luke begins his Gospel, — "Since many have undertaken to arrange a narrative of the events accomplished among us." He regards the term "undertaken" as perhaps implying a censure on the works referred to by Luke. The four evangelists, he says, did not "undertake;" they wrote under the impulse of the Holy

Spirit. But others (since their day) had "undertaken," and among them "Basilides," he says, "had the boldness to write a 'Gospel according to Basilides.'"\* The whole passage, with this notice of a gospel ascribed to Basilides, was imitated by Ambrose † and Jerome ‡ toward the end of the fourth century.

Such is the evidence that a gospel was written by Basilides. It consists in the assertion of an unknown writer, who must have lived more than a century after the death of Basilides, and the repetition of this assertion by two other writers, more than two centuries after that event. This evidence is of no weight to counterbalance the great improbability, that such a gospel should not have been taken notice of by the earlier opponents of Basilides, nor by any writer of a later age who has professed to give an account of his doctrines and sect. The fathers were very ready to charge the heretics with using books of no authority, apocryphal books. Why should we not have heard as much of a gospel written by Basilides, as of the defective Gospel of Luke used by the Marcionites?

The notion that Basilides wrote a gospel probably arose from the fact, that he wrote a commentary on the Gospels. In this he of course explained his views of Christianity; and these views, or the book in which they were contained, might be called his gospel. Agrippa Castor, who, according to Eusebius, was a contemporary of Basilides, and whose "most able confutation" Eusebius says was extant in his time, apparently knew nothing of any "Gospel of Basilides," but did mention that he "wrote twenty-four books on the Gospel," meaning by that term the four Gospels. From the twenty-third book of this Commentary Clement of Alexandria quotes several passages in connection. § The Commentary of

\* Homil. i in Lucam. Origen, Opp. iii. 933.

† Expositio Evang. Lucæ, lib. i. Opp. i. 1265, ed. Benedict.

‡ Comment. in Matth. Proem., Opp. tom. iv. pars 1. p. 2.

§ Stromat., iv. § 12, pp. 599, 600.

Basilides is one among the decisive proofs of the respect in which the Gospels were held by the theosophic Gnostics.

If the account of the author of the Homilies on Luke were founded on the existence of any work, this Commentary, in all probability, was the work, which, having heard of it and not having seen it, he called "The Gospel of Basilides." But, were there another book bearing that title, it could not have been a history of Christ's ministry at variance with our present Gospels. Of such a book we should have had far other information than an incidental mention of its title first made more than a century after the death of its author.

In what precedes, we have seen the whole amount of information concerning apocryphal gospels, the use of which is attributed to either of the three principal Gnostic sects. This information consists of two stories, one concerning "The True Gospel," and the other concerning "The Gospel of Basilides." It is doubtful, as we have seen, whether any books existed bearing those titles; but, did such books exist, they must have been works of no celebrity, not current among the Gnostics, and not regarded by them as of authority. No writer produces an example of their drawing an argument from either of them, or of their appealing to them for any purpose whatever.

We have seen, likewise, that, of the two principal writers against the Gnostics, Tertullian makes no mention of apocryphal gospels; and we have considered what is the amount of evidence which Irenæus affords of their existence and use.

Next to Irenæus and Tertullian, their contemporary, Clement of Alexandria, is our most important authority concerning the Gnostics. He was a man of extensive information, a wide reader, quoting from a great variety of authors, and acquainted with the writings of the principal theosophic Gnostics, whose words he often cites. From him, therefore,

if from any one, we should expect authentic notices of apocryphal gospels; and, accordingly, we do find mention of one such book, which, there is no doubt, really existed. It was called "The Gospel according to the Egyptians."

This book has, in modern times, been particularly remarked. It has been thought by many to have been a history of Christ's ministry, used by the Gnostics; and some have even imagined that it was one of those gospels referred to by Luke in the introduction to his own.\* The facts concerning it are these.

Clement, in reasoning against those heretics who denied the lawfulness of marriage, gives the following passage, as adduced by them in support of their doctrine. "When Salome asked the Lord, 'How long death should have power,' he replied, 'As long as you women bear children.'"† This, Clement asserts, is only a declaration that death is the natural consequence of birth. Considering the passage, therefore, as having no force to prove the point for which it was adduced, namely, our Lord's disapproval of marriage, he does not remark upon the question of its authenticity, nor mention in this place from what book it was taken. But a few pages after he says, "But those who, through their specious continence, oppose themselves to the creation of God, cite what was uttered to Salome, of which I have before taken notice. The words are found, as I suppose, in the Gospel according to the Egyptians. For they affirm that our Saviour himself said, 'I have come to destroy the works of the female;'—by 'the female' meaning lust, by 'the works' generation and corruption."‡

Clement explains the words ascribed to Jesus in a different sense from that in which they were understood by those against whom he wrote. It is unnecessary to give his remarks. Toward the conclusion of them he asks,—

\* The opinions of modern authors respecting it are collected by Jones, i. 201, seqq.

† Stromat., iii. § 6, p. 532.

‡ Ibid., § 9, pp. 539, 540.

"But do not those who prefer any thing to walking by that gospel rule which is according to the truth, also allege what follows of the conversation with Salome? For, upon her saying, 'I have done well in not bearing children,' as if there were something improper in it, the Lord replied, 'Eat of every herb, but of that which is bitter eat not;' by which words he signifies that celibacy or marriage is a matter within our own choice, neither being enforced by any prohibition of the other." \*

I proceed to the last passage which he quotes. He is here arguing particularly against a writer named Julius Cassian.

"Cassian [in defending his doctrine respecting celibacy] says, Upon Salome's asking when those things should be known concerning which she inquired, the Lord answered, 'When ye shall tread under foot the garment of your shame, and when the two become one, and the male with the female neither male nor female.' " †

By the garments of shame, that is, the garments of skin, which, according to the story in Genesis, God made for Adam and Eve, Cassian, in common with other ancient allegorists, understood human bodies, the flesh, the seat of corruption. The body was the garment of shame which he believed was to be trodden under foot. ‡

Part of the words ascribed to Christ in the passage last quoted are likewise given as a "saying of the Lord," without reference to any book, in a spurious work called the "Second Epistle of Clement," of Rome. §

The words in the passage first quoted || occur in the Doc-

\* Stromat., iii. § 9, p. 541.

† Ibid., § 13, p. 553.

‡ See the context of the passage in Clement, p. 554, and Beausobre, *Histoire du Manichéisme*, tom. ii. pp. 135, 136.

§ The words are found at the end of the fragment of this epistle which remains.

|| See before, p. 354.

trina Orientalis,\* as follows: "When the Saviour said to Salome, 'Death shall continue as long as women bear children,' he did not mean to blame the generation of children." The Gnostic writer, who here quotes the words, rejected, like Clement of Alexandria, the use made of them by the ascetics. He supposed them to have a mystical meaning, referring to Achamoth.

The title of "The Gospel according to the Egyptians" is mentioned by the author of the Homilies on Luke, in the passage before referred to, and after him by three writers who have imitated that passage; namely, Jerome, Titus Bostrensis, and Theophylact.†

Epiphanius, in his article on the Sabellians, after saying that they make use of all the writings both of the Old and of the New Testament, selecting passages to their purpose, adds, "But their whole error, and the main support of their error, they derive from certain apocryphal books, particularly that called 'The Egyptian Gospel,' a name which some have given it. For in that there are many things to their purpose, of an obscure, mystical character, which are ascribed to the Saviour; as if he himself had made known to his disciples that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were the same person."‡

An improbable story, resting solely on the testimony of Epiphanius, is not entitled to credit; and this story about the Sabellians is altogether improbable. Epiphanius does not seem to have known even the proper title of the book which he charges them with using. He says that it was called "The Egyptian Gospel;" the other writers who mention it give it the title of "The Gospel according to the Egyptians."

I have quoted all the fragments, and, I believe, mentioned

\* § 67, p. 965.

† Fabricius, i. 335\*, note.

‡ Hæres., lxii. § 2, Opp. i. 513, 514.



all the notices of this apocryphal gospel which have come down to us. One unaccustomed to such studies might be surprised to see the hypotheses and assertions that have been founded upon them in modern times. What in fact appears is, that it was an anonymous book, extant in the second century, and probably written in Egypt, in the dark and mystical style that prevailed in that country. In judging of its notoriety and importance, we must compare the few writers who recognize its existence with the far greater number to whom it was unknown, or who were not led by any circumstance to mention it. It was a book of which we should have been ignorant, but for a few incidental notices afforded by writers, none of whom give evidence of having seen it.\* Neither Clement, nor any other writer, speaks of it as a Gnostic gospel. It does not appear that it had any particular credit or currency among the generality of the Gnostics. Some ascetics of their number, in maintaining the obligation of celibacy, argued from a passage found in it, as they did undoubtedly from passages found in the four Gospels; but other Gnostics, as we have seen from the *Doctrina Orientalis*, rejected their interpretation. The Gnostics did not appeal to it in support of their more distinguishing and fundamental doctrines; for, had they done so, we should have been fully informed of the fact.

As this is the first apocryphal gospel the former existence of which we have clearly ascertained, the question arises, whether it were or were not a history of Christ's ministry.

\* That it had not been seen by Clement of Alexandria, from whom our principal information concerning it is derived, appears from his turns of expression in remarking on the quotations from it: "The words are found, as I suppose (*οἶμαι*), in the Gospel according to the Egyptians;" — "*They affirm*, that the Saviour himself said;" — and where, in appealing to a passage in the conversation with Salome, as justifying his own views, he refers to it as quoted by those whom he is opposing, and not as otherwise known to him, thus, "Do they not also allege what follows?" See Jones, i. 206.

The only argument of any weight for believing it to have been so is, that it contained a narrative of a pretended conversation of Christ with Salome. But if it were not an historical, but a doctrinal, book, there is no difficulty in supposing that the writer might find occasion to insert in it a traditional account of a discourse of Christ. A few such traditional accounts of sayings of our Lord are found in other writers of the first three centuries.\* As regards the words ascribed to him in the conversation with Salome, it is evident that the tradition concerning them was false. Our Saviour never expressed himself as he is reported to have done in the passages that have been quoted. The writer had an erroneous conception of his character. But if the book had been an historical gospel, this conception would have pervaded it, and would have been prominent in many other particular passages. A history of Christ's ministry, so foreign in its character from the Gospels as this must have been, could not have existed in the last half of the second century, — whether it were a composition of an early age, or a fiction of later times, — without having been an object of far greater attention than that which this book received. Especially, had it been brought forward by any sect in opposition to the Gospels, it would have been a primary subject of discussion. But we have seen that the book in question was little regarded or known. It could not, therefore, have been a history of Christ's ministry.

This is the only apocryphal gospel, unless the Gospel according to the Hebrews be regarded as apocryphal, the title of which is mentioned by Clement. According to his present text, he quotes one other without giving its title. But there are good reasons for believing that his text, as it stands, is corrupt, and that there was originally no mention in it of a gospel.†

\* See pp. 130, 131. — Fabricius, i. 321\*, seqq. Jones, i. 405, seqq.

† Clement (Stromat., v. § 10, p. 684) is treating of the hidden wisdom on

If this be so, then, with the exception just mentioned of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, supposing that this exception should be made, the Gospel according to the Egyptians is the only apocryphal book, bearing the title of a gospel, that is mentioned by any writer during the three centuries succeeding our Lord's death, from which a single quotation is professedly given, or of which it is probable that a single fragment remains.

As I have said, the title of no other apocryphal gospel, used by any Gentile Christians, is mentioned by Clement. But it is desirable to give the fullest information on the subject which we are examining; for, as I have before remarked,

which he so much insists. He professes to quote a passage from a prophet, apparently intending Isaiah, though nothing very like it is found in his writings, or elsewhere in the Old Testament. It is this: "Who shall understand the parable of the Lord [Jehovah], but the wise and understanding, and he who loves his Lord?" Clement then, as his text now stands, goes on thus: "For it is in the power of few to understand these things. For the Lord, though not unwilling to communicate, the prophet says [or, the Scripture says], declared in a certain gospel, 'My secret is for me and the sons of my house'" — "Ὁὐ γὰρ φθονῶν, φησί, παρήγγειλεν ὁ Κύριος ἐν τινὶ εὐαγγελίῳ," κ. τ. λ. I suppose the words "in a certain gospel" to be an interpolation. The passage quoted corresponds to what is found in some copies of the Septuagint at Isa. xxiv. 16. (See the note on the passage in Potter's edition of Clement, where, in the first line, "cap. 2" is a misprint for "cap. 24") The verb φησί, *says*, must have for its subject, either the prophet mentioned immediately before, or the Scripture (the ellipsis supposed in the last case being not uncommon). But Clement cannot be imagined to have made so incongruous an assertion as that "The prophet says," or "The Scripture says," "that the Lord [Christ] declared in a certain gospel." That he considered himself as borrowing the words, "My secret is for me and my children," not from a certain gospel, but from Isaiah, appears also from the circumstance, that, a few lines after them, he gives a quotation from Isaiah, introducing it with the words, "The prophet says again" (Πάλιν ὁ προφήτης.) I suppose, therefore, that the words "in a certain gospel" were originally a marginal gloss made by a transcriber, who attributed to Christ the declaration quoted by Clement, and who, knowing that it was not found in the four Gospels, thought it must be in some gospel or other. (See Jones, i. 422, seqq.)

it is a subject that requires elucidation rather than argument. I will therefore advert to another work, which he quotes under the name of "The Traditions," and which has been imagined to be the same with an apocryphal gospel called "The Gospel according to Matthias." He speaks of the Traditions in the following passages:—

"To attain wisdom we must begin with wondering at things, as Plato says in his *Theætetus*; and Matthias, in the Traditions, thus concludes, 'Wonder at present things;' making this the first step of our progress in knowledge."\*

In arguing against the licentiousness of the Carpocratians, he adduces another passage, thus:—

"It is said, likewise, that Matthias also thus taught: 'We must contend against the flesh and humble it, granting it no intemperate pleasure, but promote the growth of the soul through faith and knowledge.'"<sup>†</sup>

He again quotes a passage ascribed to Matthias, for the purpose, as before, of confirming his own doctrine: "It is said in the Traditions, that Matthias, the apostle, often repeated, 'that, if the neighbor of one of the elect sin, he himself has sinned; for, if he had conducted himself as Reason (the Logos) dictates, his neighbor would have so revered his course of life as not to sin.'"<sup>‡</sup> The language is too unlimited, but the morality is good.

In what is supposed to be a Latin translation of a portion of a lost work of Clement, called "*Hypotyposes*," or Institutions, there is another strange passage quoted from the Traditions, as agreeing with the conceptions of the writer. Clement, if he be the writer, is commenting on the first words of the First Epistle of John, which—to render as he understood them—are these: "What was from the beginning, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have heard,

\* *Stromat.*, ii § 9, pp 452, 453.

† *Ibid.*, iii. § 4, p. 523.

‡ *Ibid.*, vii. § 13, p. 882.

and our hands have touched, concerning the Logos of life." He maintains (conformably to what Photius says\* was a heresy affirmed by Clement in the work just mentioned), that the Logos who was from the beginning is to be distinguished from the Logos who became incarnate. The latter consisted of those powers of the former which proceeded from him as "a ray from the sun;" and "this ray, coming in the flesh, became an object of touch to the disciples."—"Thus," he says, "it is related in the Traditions, that 'John, touching his external body, plunged his hand in, the hardness of the flesh offering no resistance to it, but giving way to the hand of the disciple.' Hence it is that John affirms, 'Our hands have touched concerning the Logos of life;'<sup>†</sup> that which came in the flesh being made an object of touch."<sup>‡</sup> Such traditions strikingly illustrate what would have been the state of the history of Jesus in the latter half of the second century, had it not been for the early existence and authoritative character of the Gospels.

There is no reason to suppose that the book called "The Traditions" was in favor with any Gnostics. Clement does not represent it as having been cited by any heretical writer. On the contrary, he himself quotes it as confirming his own opinions. He does not entitle it "The Traditions of Matthias," as it has been called in modern times, but simply "The Traditions." The former title has been given it, because, in the three passages quoted by Clement in his *Stromata*, the name of Matthias occurs; and this title having been given it, the book has been fancied by some to be the same with an apocryphal gospel called "The Gospel according to Matthias."

Of this book, nothing but the title remains. It is first

\* Photii Bibliotheca, col. 285, ed. Schotti.

† "Propter quod et infert, *Et manus nostræ contractaverunt de verbis vitæ.*"

‡ Apud Clementis Fragmenta, Opp. p. 1009.

mentioned by the author of the Homilies on Luke; after him, by his imitators, Ambrose and Jerome, and also by Eusebius. Possibly the notion that there was such a book may have arisen from the fact mentioned by Clement,\* that the Gnostics boasted that their opinions were favored by Matthias, or, in other words, that they taught the Gospel as it was understood by Matthias, the Gospel according to Matthias. Had they possessed a book with that title known to Clement, it seems likely that he would have spoken of it, when thus taking notice of their claim to the countenance of Matthias. Considering the tendency of the fathers to charge the heretics with using books of no authority, the bare titles of supposed apocryphal and heretical works given by the author of the Homilies on Luke, and by writers after the end of the third century, deserve little consideration.

Before the time of Origen, no writer besides Irenæus and Clement mentions any apocryphal gospel, real or supposed, except Serapion, as quoted by Eusebius. Serapion, who was bishop of Antioch about the close of the second century, wrote, concerning a gospel called "The Gospel according to Peter," a tract, of which Eusebius gives the following account.†

"Another tract was composed by Serapion concerning the Gospel according to Peter, so called, the object of which was to confute the errors contained in it, on account of some in the church at Rhossus who had been led by this book to adopt heterodox opinions. From this it may be worth while to quote a few words in which he expresses his opinion concerning it. 'We, brethren,' he writes, 'acknowledge the authority both of Peter and the other apostles, as we do that of Christ; but we reject, with good reason, the writings which falsely bear their names, well knowing that such have not

\* See before, p. 328.

† Hist. Eccles. lib. vi. c. 12.

been handed down to us. I, indeed, when I was with you, supposed that you were all going on in a right faith; and, not reading through the gospel under the name of Peter which was produced by them [those who were pleased with it], I said, If this is all that troubles you, let the book be read. But having since learnt from what has been told me, that their minds had fallen into some heresy, I hasten to be with you again, brethren, so that you may expect me shortly. Now we, brethren, know that a like heresy was held by Marcion, who also contradicted himself, not comprehending what he said, as you may learn from what has been written to you.\* For we have been able to procure this gospel from others who use it, that is, from his followers, who are called *Docetæ* (for the greater part of the opinions in question belong to their system), and, having gone through it, we have found it for the most part conformable to the true doctrine of the Saviour; but there are some things exceptionable, which we subjoin for your information.’”

We may conclude, from this account, that the Gospel of Peter was not a history of Christ’s ministry. Serapion would not have regarded with such indifference as he first manifested a history of our Lord, ascribed to the apostle Peter, which he had not before seen. Were it genuine, it must have been to him, as to any one else, an object of great interest. But the supposition of its genuineness is too extravagant to require discussion. Nor can we suppose it to have been an original

\* As this sentence is unimportant, and as I believe the present text to be corrupt, I have ventured to render it as perhaps it should be amended. It now stands thus: ‘*Ἡμεῖς δὲ, ἀδελφοί, καταλαβόμενοι ὁποίας ἦν αἰρέσεως ὁ Μαρκιανός, καὶ ἑαυτῷ ἠναντιοῦτο, μὴ νοῶν ἃ ἐλάλει, ἃ μαθήσεσθε ἐξ ὧν ὑμῖν ἐγράφη.*’ *Ἐδυνήθημεν γὰρ παρ’ ἄλλων, κ. τ. λ.* I would read the first words as follows: ‘*Ἡμεῖς δὲ, ἀδελφοί, κατελύβομεν ὅτι ὁμοίας ἦν αἰρέσεως ὁ Μαρκίων, δὲ καὶ ἑαυτῷ ἠναντιοῦτο, κ. τ. λ.*’

There is also some uncertainty about the precise meaning of the next sentence; but, fortunately, this uncertainty does not extend to any thing important in the paragraph

history (that is to say, not a compilation from any one or more of the four Gospels), which, though not the work of Peter, was yet entitled to credit. For it is impossible that the existence of such a history should not have been notorious; that it should not have been a frequent subject of remark; that it should have been unknown to Serapion, himself a bishop and a controversial writer; or, even if previously unknown, that it should not at once have excited his attention. — Nor can it have been a history founded upon one or more of the four Gospels, with certain additions favoring the opinions of the Docetæ. When we recollect the abundant notices of Marcion's gospel, which was only a mutilated copy of Luke's, it cannot be believed that there was another historical book extant among Marcion's followers, of a similar character (except that it contained some obnoxious additions), of which the notices are so scanty, and which is never mentioned as an *historical* book. There is still another supposition, — that it was a history undeserving of credit, a history containing many fabulous accounts. But this is inconsistent with the manner in which Serapion mentions it; for he speaks of it with but slight censure, commending the generality of its contents; as no catholic writer of his time would have spoken of such a professed history of Christ's ministry as we have last imagined.

The Gospel according to Peter, then, was not an *historical* book; and this appears, not merely from what has been said, but from the fact, that neither Serapion nor Eusebius gives any intimation that it bore that character. Serapion's treatise was in the hands of Eusebius, as it probably had been in those of many before him. It treated of the errors in the book; it was written to refute them; and, had these errors consisted in false narratives concerning Christ, there is no reasonable doubt that plenary evidence of the fact would have existed, both in the writings of Serapion and Eusebius, and in those of other fathers. It appears that it was used by the



Gnostics, and, had it been a professed history of Christ's ministry used by them, we should certainly have had much more full information concerning it. The supposition that it was not an historical book, and this alone, it may be further observed, agrees with the manner in which Serapion describes it, as "for the most part conformable to the true doctrine" (not the true history) "of the Saviour, but containing some things exceptionable."

The book, it may be added, was not of any importance or notoriety. Serapion, Bishop of Antioch, in his time the principal see in the East, was, as we have seen, unacquainted with it, till his attention was called to it by some Christians of his diocese, as favoring heretical doctrines. We may conclude, therefore, that it was unknown to a great majority of Christians, his contemporaries. Besides the notice of it by him, we find the following passage in Origen: "Some say that the brothers of Jesus were the sons of Joseph by a wife to whom he was married before Mary, relying upon the tradition in the Gospel according to Peter or the book of James."\* It is also referred to by Eusebius and Jerome, who mention it as an apocryphal work falsely ascribed to Peter. Eusebius especially enumerates it among those books which were brought forward by the heretics under the names of apostles; such as no writer of the Church had thought worth commemorating, they being altogether devoid of good sense and piety. No fragment of it remains, and these are all the notices of it found in the first four centuries.

We now come to Origen. It is doubtful whether the Homilies on Luke, which have been so often mentioned in this chapter, are to be referred to him as their author.† If they are not, there is no passage in all Origen's works in

\* Comment in Matth., tom x., Opp. iii. 462, 463.

† See the Preface to the third volume of De la Rue's edition of Origen.

which he speaks of an apocryphal gospel as used by any Gentile Christians, catholic or heretical, besides that relating to the Gospel of Peter which has just been quoted. Of the book of James, mentioned in connection with it, I shall speak hereafter.

I have remarked on three titles of apocryphal gospels mentioned by the author of the Homilies on Luke. There is one other, "The Gospel according to Thomas," to which likewise I shall advert hereafter.

Besides those writers whom I have quoted, there is none who speaks of apocryphal gospels before Eusebius, in the first half of the fourth century. He enumerates among heretical books, "altogether absurd and irreligious," three of those already mentioned, namely, the gospels of Peter, Thomas, and Matthias,\* but gives no further information concerning them, and adds no new title to the list.

I have brought down the inquiry respecting apocryphal gospels to a much later period than was necessary. No one will suppose that a book of which there is no mention before the fourth century could have served the Gnostics as a basis for their doctrines. If any book appeared after the commencement of the fourth century, pretending to be an original history of Christ's ministry,—of which we have no proof, and which, in the nature of things, is altogether improbable,—no one will imagine that it was entitled to regard. Of any book of an early age, purporting to give an account of his ministry different from that contained in the four Gospels, it is a moral impossibility that we should not have received full and unequivocal information from writers before the time of Eusebius.

\* Hist. Eccles., lib. iii. c. 25.

There is no reason, as I conceive, to suppose that the apocryphal gospels which have been mentioned, or the other apocryphal books extant during the first three centuries, were commonly written with the fraudulent design of furnishing the pretended authority of Jesus or his apostles in support of false doctrines or spurious history ; or that, when they bore the name of an apostle, it was intended that they should be ascribed to him as his proper work. The author of such a book may have put his own opinions into the mouth of an apostle by a common rhetorical artifice, as Plato in his dialogues introduces Socrates and Timæus as teaching his doctrines ; or as if one, at the present day, were to publish a work, calling it “The Gospel as taught by (*according to*) St. Paul,” or “The Gospel as taught by St. James.” Of this mode of writing we have a remarkable example in the Clementine Homilies, the author of which could have intended no deception. But the whole account given in them of the actions of Peter is a fiction, and the discourses ascribed to him contain only the writer’s own views of the character of Christianity. According, however, to the ancient use of language, this book might have been, and possibly was, called “The Gospel according to Peter.” Such books might be, or it might be fancied that they were, founded on some traditionary information respecting the teaching of an apostle. Thus a book called “The Preaching of Peter,” or “The Preaching of Peter and Paul,” was regarded both by Clement of Alexandria and by Lactantius as a work of some authority. Lactantius supposed it to be a record of their preaching while together at Rome.\* Clement quotes it in the same manner as he quotes “The Traditions” before mentioned, and the works of the Pagan philosophers, not in evidence of facts, but as corresponding with and confirming his own opinions.

\* Institut., lib. iv. c. 21.

Irenæus speaks, at we have seen, of a gospel by Judas scariot. There was reported to be another under the name of Matthias, and another under the name of Thomas; but these titles are not mentioned before the third century. Of the books or of the titles which have been enumerated, bearing the names of apostles, there is besides only the Gospel of Peter, which became known to Serapion about the close of the second century. But it is altogether incredible that any Gentile Christian in the second century should have engaged in so hopeless and foolish an attempt, as to endeavor to pass off a composition of his own as a gospel written by an apostle, — a gospel which had never before been heard of. Nor is it much more likely that any Gentile Christian, without ascribing his work to an apostle, would, after the destruction of Jerusalem, have pretended to give an original history of Christ's ministry, at variance with the four Gospels. As we have already seen, there is no evidence that any such work existed.

The subject of the apocryphal gospels has, as it was natural it should, attracted much attention. It is a subject which deserved to be thoroughly examined. But the unavoidable consequence of the manner in which it has been treated has been to produce a very false impression of their importance. They were obscure writings, very little regarded or known by any Christians, catholic or heretical. We find in Justin Martyr and Tertullian nothing concerning them; in Irenæus, two titles, one purporting to be that of a book, which most probably was not extant, and the other likewise perhaps originating in mistake, but supposed to belong to a Valentinian gospel, which there is no evidence that the Valentinians ever appealed to. Clement gives some extracts from a gospel which he found quoted by the Encratites or ascetics. Serapion mentions the Gospel of Peter, as in the hands of persons belonging to a parish in his diocese, called Rhossus, and as used by some of the Docetæ. Origen once refers to the same book.

And the author of the Homilies on Luke adds three other titles of books of which he gives no account.\* These are all the notices of apocryphal gospels to be found in all the writers of Christian antiquity before the end of the third century. Had they been works of any notoriety, works possessing any intrinsic or accidental importance, we should have had page after page of controversy, discussion, and explanation concerning them.

About the beginning of the last century, a manuscript was made known of a gospel ascribed to Barnabas, in the Italian language, but supposed to be translated from the Arabic. It is the work of a Mahometan, or a work interpolated by a Mahometan. Much more has been written by different authors about this book† than all that is to be found in the Christian writers of the first three centuries concerning apocryphal gospels. Yet it is a book of which, probably, few of my readers have ever heard; and of which he who has known any thing may have forgotten what he knew. It is easy to

\* I have not adverted in the text to one title mentioned by the author of the Homilies; namely, "The Gospel according to the Twelve Apostles;" because, as we learn from Jerome (*Advers. Pelagianos*, lib. iii. *Opp. tom. iv. pars ii. col. 533*), this was only a name which was sometimes given to the Gospel of the Hebrews. It may naturally have had its origin in the circumstance that the Hebrew Christians affirmed that the Gospel of Matthew, which alone they used, contained the Gospel as taught by the apostles, or, in other words, was the Gospel according to the apostles. But there is something more to be observed. The title given is not simply, "The Gospel according to the Apostles," but "The Gospel according to the *Twelve* Apostles." The Hebrew Christians, generally, did not recognize the apostleship of St. Paul, but regarded him as a false teacher. They revolted at his doctrine of the abolition of their Law, and of their peculiar national distinctions. Hence they may have called their gospel the Gospel according to the *Twelve* Apostles, of whose number he was not, in order to imply that it was from the twelve apostles, and not from him, the preacher to the Gentiles, that the true doctrines of the Gospel were to be learned.

† See Fabricius, iii. 373, *seqq.*; Jones, i. 162, *seqq.*; Sale's Translation of the Koran (ed. 1825), in his Preliminary Discourse, p. 102, and in his Notes, vol. i. pp. 61, 170; and the works referred to by the authors mentioned.

apply this fact to assist ourselves in judging of the importance to be attached to the notices of apocryphal gospels found in the fathers.

It may seem as if, in reference to our present inquiry, any further discussion of the subject must be useless; and it would be so, but for the misapprehensions which have existed concerning it. There are some fabulous books still extant, which, thus standing as it were in the foreground, are more likely, at first view, to be taken for true representatives of ancient apocryphal gospels, than those titles and fragments, appearing in the remote distance, with which alone we are in fact concerned. These books have, in modern times, been called "*Gospels of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary*," and "*Gospels of the Infancy*," that is, of the infancy of Jesus. They have, likewise, directly or indirectly, been brought into competition with the four Gospels. But whatever tends to weaken the exclusive authority of the catholic Gospels, or to confound them in the same class with fabulous writings, opens the way for a vague conjecture that there may have been in early times other histories of the ministry of Christ at variance with those Gospels, and entitled to as much or more credit. We will, therefore, go on to take notice of the works referred to.

In the quotation that I have given from Origen,\* besides the mention of the Gospel of Peter, there is mention, likewise, of a book of James. About the middle of the sixteenth century, the celebrated visionary Postel brought to the notice of European scholars a work written in Greek, a manuscript of which he found in the East. It is a book of about a quarter of the size of the Gospel of Mark. He entitled it "*The Protevangelion* (that is, the First Gospel) of St. James the Less;" † — the pretended events which it relates being sup-

\* See before, p. 365.

† The work has been republished by Fabricius, Jones, and Thilo.

posed by him to have occurred prior to those recorded by St. Mark, to whose Gospel he fancied it intended for an introduction. But a number of manuscripts of it are now known, and the title *Protevangelion* is not supported by their authority.\* The author, in the conclusion of the work, gives his name as James. It is a collection of legendary fables principally concerning the nativity of the Virgin Mary, her history and that of Joseph, and the nativity of Jesus. The nativity of the Virgin is represented to have been miraculous, like that of Samuel, and to have been announced by an angel. Some things are interwoven from the first two chapters ascribed to Matthew, and from the account of our Saviour's birth given by Luke. There are two coincidences of its narrative with what is found in ancient authors, which deserve notice. The first relates to the passage of Origen just referred to.

Origen says, that, conformably to the book of James, the individuals called in the Gospels the brothers† of Jesus were children of Joseph by a former wife. In the *Protevangelion*, Mary is represented as having been dedicated by her parents as a virgin to the service of God in the Temple, but at the age of twelve years as having been removed thence by the priests, and committed in trust to Joseph, with the purpose of her becoming his wife. Before receiving her, he is represented as saying, "I am an old man and have children."‡

\* Its title is given with much diversity in different manuscripts; but in all its variations expresses that the subject of the work is a History of the Nativity of Mary. In what is supposed to be the oldest manuscript it runs thus: "A Narration and History how the superholy Mother of God (*ἡ ὑπεραγία Θεοτόκος*) was born." (Thilo, p. liii.) But the book is not confined to a mere account of the nativity of Mary: it extends (as appears above) to the history of her life.

† The word in the original, *ἀδελφοί*, should be rendered *kinsmen*, according to a common use of it. It does not in the passage in question denote brothers, in the limited sense of the English word.

‡ *Protevangelion*, c. 9.

The story, that Joseph, when he married Mary, was an old man with children by a former wife, is found in many writers after the middle of the fourth century.

One of the fables in this book is, that Mary, after childbirth, remained in all respects as a virgin.\* The story is referred to and countenanced by Clement of Alexandria.† Tertullian, on the contrary, in contending against those Gnostics who asserted that the body of Christ was not a body of flesh and blood, and that it was in no part derived from his mother, insists on his proper birth, and incidentally represents it as in all respects like that of others.‡ It is not, however, to be inferred that the Gnostics maintained the opinion just mentioned; for, on the one hand, the Marcionites denied altogether the nativity of Christ; and, on the other, that opinion was not necessarily connected with the doctrine of the theosophic Gnostics, who ascribed to Christ a body, though not a human body. But, with a strange approximation to the Gnostic denial of the proper body of Christ, it has become the established faith of the Roman Catholic Church.§ It was made an article of orthodox belief by the Lateran Council, held under Pope Martin the First, in the year 649.

Unless Origen, under the name of the book of James,

\* Protevangelion, cc. 19, 20. † Stromat., vii. § 16, pp. 889, 890.

‡ In his tract *De Carne Christi*.

§ "Il convient toutefois qu'il est de la foi catholique, que Marie est demeurée Vierge après l'enfantement comme devant." (Fleury, *Hist. Ecclés. An. 847*) In the Catechism of the Council of Trent (pars i. art. 3, n. 13) it is said, "Præterea, quo nihil admirabilius dici omnino, aut cogitari potest, nascitur [Christus] ex matre sine ullâ maternæ virginitatis diminutione, et quo modo postea ex sepulcro clauso et obsignato egressus est, atque ad discipulos clausis januis introivit: vel, ne a rebus etiam, quæ a naturâ quotidie fieri videmus, discedatur, quo modo solis radî concretam vitri substantiam penetrant, neque frangunt tamen, aut aliquâ ex parte lædunt; simili, inquam, et altiori modo Jesus Christus ex materno alvo, sine ullo maternæ virginitatis detrimento, editus est, ipsius enim incorruptam virginis tatem verissimis laudibus celebramus."



refers to some work like the Protevangelion, that is, to some pretended history of the mother of our Lord, which may have served for the foundation of that now extant, there is no mention of any such work before the latter half of the fourth century. In the fourth and fifth centuries, it seems probable that there was more than one narrative of this kind in existence; but that these narratives were generally regarded as fabulous and worthless.\* During the ages of darkness that followed, the legends concerning the Virgin found favor, in common with other fables which overspread ecclesiastical and profane history. They have entered into the established mythology of the Roman Catholic Church, and have furnished conceptions for its great masters in the art of painting. But the particular book we are considering, the Protevangelion, never obtained such credit in the West as in the East. In the West, its existence had become unknown before it was brought to light by Postel. In the East, it seems probable that it was at one period read in some churches on certain holydays, in the same manner as the legends of Saints were read on their festivals † The oldest manuscript of it now known is referred to the tenth century.‡

The fables respecting the nativity and history of Mary, like those which went to the compilation of other apocryphal writings, being destitute of all authority, were recast in different forms by different hands. They are extant, with much diversity from the Protevangelion, in a work found in two Latin manuscripts, one of the fourteenth and the other of the fifteenth century, § in which they are connected at the end with a few stories of miracles performed by our Lord in his infancy. || In Latin, also, there is another work, shorter and

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\* Thilo, p. lx. seqq.; p. xci. seqq: conf. Epiphanius, Hæres., xxiv. § 12, p. 94.

† Thilo, pp. lxx, lx.

‡ Ibid., p. liii.

§ Ibid., p. cviii

|| The work is published by Thilo under the title of "*Historia de Nativitate Mariæ et de Infantia Salvatoris.*"

less extravagant than those which have been mentioned, relating to the birth and history of Mary, of which the modern title is "The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary."\* Of this the pretended Hebrew original was ascribed to the Apostle Matthew, and the translation to Jerome. The fiction by which Jerome is represented as its translator shows that its composition must have been later than the fourth century.

We proceed to the Books of the Infancy. As I have mentioned, the author of the Homilies on Luke gives the title of a Gospel according to Thomas; and the same title is found in subsequent writers.† We may conjecture it to have been one of those professed expositions of Christianity which were called "gospels." Nor is there any thing in the ancient writers who mention it to countenance a different supposition. But there is now extant in Greek a collection of fables concerning the infancy and childhood of Jesus, which is not, in the manuscripts of it, entitled "a gospel," but the writer of which announces himself as Thomas an Israelite.‡ This book has been thought to be essentially the same with the gospel mentioned by the author of the Homilies, and to have been in existence in the second century. But of such books, more or less resembling one another, there are a number extant, which have passed in modern times under the name of "Gospels of the Infancy."

One of this number (much larger than the book ascribed to Thomas in its present state) is written in Arabic. It was published with a Latin translation in the year 1697, by Henry Sike, Professor of the Oriental Languages in the University of Cambridge.§ With this the name of Thomas is not

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\* It may be found in Fabricius, Jones, and Thilo.

† See Fabricius, i. 131, seqq; Thilo, lxxix seqq.

‡ A fragment—the first part—of this book may be found in Fabricius and Jones. The whole, as now extant, is given by Thilo.

§ The Latin version has been republished by Fabricius and Jones; and the original with the version, by Thilo.

connected. It consists of stories of pretended miracles, which accompanied the birth and infancy of our Saviour, and which he himself performed when a child. There is some fancy in these fictions. They have a tinge of Eastern invention, but are essentially of the same character as the common legends of the Middle Ages. The relater sometimes refers to facts in the Gospels, and connects his story with them. Thus he gives a narrative concerning two robbers, whom he represents as the same afterwards crucified with Jesus.\* These and similar fables became popular in the East, particularly among the followers of Mahomet. Two of them appear in the Koran,† and others have been current among Mahometan writers. ‡

The compilation in Greek that bears the name of Thomas has a general correspondence with the last half of the preceding. Omitting those pretended miracles which accompanied the nativity and infancy of Jesus, it begins with those performed in his childhood. Of these, about half the stories in one work correspond to those in the other, though the order in which they are arranged is not the same, and they are often differently told. Both works imply a very low state of intellect and morals in those by whom and for whom they were written. In some of the fictions, Jesus, as a child, is represented as violent and cruel, so that his father, Joseph, is introduced as saying, "From this time we will not suffer him to go out of the house; for whoever makes him angry is killed." § The notions of the writer of either book seem in this respect to have been derived from the use of power by an Oriental despot.

\* Cap. 23.

† One is of Christ's speaking while in his cradle (Arabic Gospel of the Infancy, c 1), which he did according to the Koran (chap. 3, vol i. p 58, and chap. 19, vol ii. p 145). The other is of his making birds of clay, to which he gave life (Arabic Gospel, cc. 36, 46), which is referred to in the Koran (chap 3, vol. i. p. 59, and chap. 5, vol i. p. 139).

‡ See Sike's notes (republished by Thilo).

§ Arabic Gospel, c. 49. Gospel of Thomas, c 14.

A similar collection of fables appears to be, or to have been, extant in different languages of the East.\* Several manuscript collections of them are extant in Latin, more or less diverse from one another, and from the Arabic and the Greek compilation. One only of these is known to bear the name of Thomas. The author's name is otherwise given as Matthew the Evangelist, or James the son of Joseph (to whom the Protevangelion is ascribed); and in one copy the pretended authors are Onesimus and John the Evangelist.†

In regard to these fables respecting the infancy and childhood of Jesus, we find an early notice of one of them in Irenæus. He is giving an account of a sect, the Marcosians, who believed, like the Jewish Cabalists, that there were profound mysteries hidden in the letters of the alphabet. After speaking of their perversion of the Scriptures, Irenæus says, —

“Moreover, they bring forward an unspeakable number of apocryphal and spurious writings, which they have fabricated, to confound the simple, and such as are ignorant of those writings which contain the truth. To this end, they also adopt that fiction concerning our Lord, that, when he was a child, and learning the alphabet, his master, as usual, told him to say Alpha (A); and that, upon his repeating Alpha, when his master next told him to say Beta (B), the Lord replied, ‘Do you first tell me what Alpha is, and then I will tell you what Beta is.’ And this they explain as showing that he alone knew the mystery, which he revealed, in the letter Alpha.”‡

We may first incidentally remark on this passage, that the many apocryphal books fabricated by the Marcosians could have had but a short-lived existence, and were but of little note; since no one of them is specified by name in any writer; nor does Irenæus, in his long article on the sect, nor

\* Thilo, p. xxxii. seqq.

† Ibid., p. cv. seqq.

‡ Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 20, p. 91.

any other writer, refer elsewhere to any use which the Marcosians made of them. It may next be observed, that the passage is remarkable, as affording one of the only two examples which are reported by the writers during the three centuries succeeding the death of our Lord, of an argument for a Gnostic doctrine, founded on a narrative concerning him not related in the Gospels.\* But that this narrative was already incorporated into a collection of like stories does not appear from Irenæus. His words, on the contrary, rather imply that it was not. "In addition," he says, to their apocryphal books,—for this is the force of his language,—“they adopt for the same purpose that fiction,” a well-known fiction, as is implied, “concerning the Lord.”

This fiction has become the foundation of two different stories in the Arabic compilation,† and of three in the Greek,‡ in the former our Saviour being represented as having had two successive schoolmasters, and in the latter, three; and, as might be expected from its antiquity, none of the fables of the same class appears to have been more widely circulated.§

\* The other example which I refer to is the use, before mentioned (see p. 354, seqq.), which was made by the Encratites of a passage in the Gospel of the Egyptians.

† Cc 48, 49.

‡ Cc. 6, 7, 8, 14, 15.

§ “As to the life of Jesus Christ,” says Chardin, “the Persian legends contain not only what is in the Gospels, but likewise all the tales found in the legends of the Eastern Christians, and particularly in an Armenian legend, entitled *l’Evangile Enfant*,\* which is nothing but a tissue of fabulous miracles; such, for example, as that Jesus, seeing Joseph much troubled at having cut a board of cedar too short, said to him, ‘Why are you so troubled? Give me one end of the board and pull the other, and it will grow longer.’ Another story is, that, being sent to school to learn the alphabet, his master directed him to pronounce A. He paused, and said to his master, ‘Tell me, first, why the first letter of the alphabet is formed as it is.’ Upon this, his master treating him as a talkative little child, he answered, ‘I will not say A, till you tell me why the first letter is made as it is.’ But his master growing angry, he said to him, ‘I will instruct you, then. The first letter

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\* The title is so rendered by Chardin.

During a long interval after Irenæus, we hear nothing more of fables respecting the infancy and childhood of Christ. There is nothing necessarily miraculous in the supposed fact related in the story which he quotes: on the contrary, none but the Marcosians, or those who entertained like notions with them of the mysterious significance of the letters of the alphabet, could have inferred from it any supernatural knowledge in the infant Jesus. Epiphanius is the first writer who distinctly refers to stories of fabulous miracles performed by Jesus in his childhood; and these stories he does not altogether reject. The miracle at the marriage feast at Cana, he says, was the first performed by Jesus, "except, perhaps, those which he is reported to have performed in his youth, in play as it were, according to what some say."\* After him, Chrysostom expresses his opinion, that the miracle of Cana was the first performed by our Saviour, and rejects, as wholly undeserving of credit, the fables concerning miracles performed by him in his childhood.†

As regards the book now extant, of which the author calls himself Thomas, it could not have been that referred to by the author of the Homilies on Luke, and subsequently by some other ancient writers, under the name of the Gospel of Thomas; for it is evidently a composition of the Middle Ages. All, it would seem, that can be meant by those modern

of the alphabet is formed of three perpendicular lines on a horizontal line (the Armenian A is thus formed, very like an inverted *m*) to teach us that the Beginning of all things is one Essence in three persons' "—*Voyages en Perse*, tom. ii pp. 269, 270, ed. 4to, 1735.

The difference between the Armenian version of the story of the alphabet and that given by the Marcosians shows the changes to which fables of this sort were exposed. Two stories, different from each other, but both corresponding essentially to the marvel of lengthening the cedar board, are found, one in the Arabic Gospel (c. 39), and the other in the Gospel of Thomas (c. 18).

\* Hæres., li. § 20, Opp. i. 442.

† Homil. in Joannem, xx. col. 132, ed. 1697. Homil. xvi. col. 108. Homil. xxii. col. 124.

writers who have regarded the two books as the same, is, that the one anciently called the Gospel of Thomas served as a basis for the present compilation of fables. But the present book bears so thoroughly, in its matter and style, the character of an age far later than that in which the Gospel of Thomas is first mentioned, that, should we attempt to separate this character from it, we should find that nothing would be left. Besides, of those different compilations of fables that have been mentioned, only one set professes to have been written by an author called Thomas; and no copy which bears his name assumes to be called a gospel. The supposition, that the ancient Gospel of Thomas was so remarkable a book, as one containing a collection of stories respecting our Lord's childhood must have been regarded during the first three centuries, cannot be reconciled with the facts, that we are not informed of its contents by any ancient writer; that it is not quoted under that name by any ancient writer; that those who mention the fables do not speak of the Gospel of Thomas, and that those who mention the Gospel of Thomas do not speak of the fables.\*

\* There is another book that has been reckoned among apocryphal writings,—"The Gospel of Nicodemus," so called,—of which, when the first edition of this work was published, it did not seem to me that there was occasion to give an account in relation to the argument before us, or that there would be any propriety in doing so incidentally. But I have remarked that one of the most noted modern champions of infidelity (Strauss), in treating of the death of our Lord, and elsewhere, often quotes it, and compares its statements with those of the evangelists; as he has also quoted, in like manner, the Protevangelion of James, the History of the Nativity of Mary (see before, p. 374), and the Gospels of the Infancy.

The Gospel of Nicodemus is equally fabulous with the books just mentioned. The Greek original has been published, from a collation of different copies, with elaborate notes, by Thilo. A Latin translation, which differs from it in many particulars, may be found in Fabricius and Jones. The copies of this book, like those of others of the same class, vary much from one another.

According to the Greek text, a person who announces himself as Ananias, a Jew, says, that, in the reign of Theodosius (his blunders in chronology

But, it may be asked, were the fables contained in the Protevangelion and the Books of the Infancy ever really believed? The question falls into the same wide class with

are such as to leave it uncertain whether he meant the first or second emperor of that name), he had discovered this book, that it was written originally in Hebrew by Nicodemus, and that he had translated it into Greek.

The book which follows this proem consists, first, of an account of the trial of our Lord before Pilate, founded on the relations of the evangelists. It is swelled by a narrative of the appearance before Pilate of many who had been the subjects or witnesses of his miracles, — miracles recorded in the Gospels, — who are introduced as testifying in his favor. Then, after an account of his death and burial, follows a marvellous story respecting Joseph of Arimathea, who is represented as having been persecuted by the Jews on account of the honor paid by him to the body of Jesus, and to have been delivered from confinement by Jesus immediately after his own resurrection; and narratives of individuals supposed to have witnessed the ascension of our Lord, and to have testified to this fact before the Jewish Sanhedrim.

Here it seems probable that the book originally ended; but, in some manuscripts, a conclusion is found, which consists of an account of our Lord's descent to Hades, and of his carrying away thence the souls of the just who had died before his time. It is given in the form of a deposition before the Sanhedrim of two of the dead, who were present in Hades upon the occasion; which deposition they themselves committed to writing, and gave into the hands of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. This concluding legend appears to have been the immediate source of those conceptions respecting our Lord's descent to Hell, or the "Harrowing of Hell," as it was called in old English literature, which were common in the latter part of the Middle Ages.

Such is the Gospel of Nicodemus. It is not named by any Greek or Latin father; nor is there any clear proof of its existence till a very late period. (See the *Testimonia et Censuræ* collected by Fabricius, i. 214-237, and the *Prolegomena* of Thilo.) There would be no greater want of good sense in quoting a miracle-play of the Middle Ages for the purpose of confronting its representations with those of the evangelists, than what appears in quoting for this end the Gospel of Nicodemus; or, it may be added, in thus quoting the Protevangelion of James, the History of the Nativity, and the Gospels of the Infancy.

But as this book has been mentioned, it may be well to enter into some further explanation respecting it. There has been, as I conceive, a great confusion of ideas concerning it, arising from the error of giving it the additional name of "The Acts of Pilate." This error appears to have had its origin from two passages in the History of the Franks by Gregory of Tours,



many others, to all which a common answer is to be given. Were the legends with which the whole history of Christendom was swarming from the fourth century to the fifteenth

written in the latter part of the sixth century. In the first of these passages (lib. i. cap. 21), Gregory makes a very brief mention of the imprisonment of Joseph of Arimathea by the chief-priests (the story before referred to), which he says was related in the Acts of Pilate (*Gesta Pilati*), sent by him to the Emperor Tiberius; and in the second (*ibid.*, c. 24) he mentions these Acts again, as containing information, given by Pilate to the emperor, of the miracles, death, and passion of Jesus, and as being still extant. The circumstance, that, in the first passage, he has referred to the persecution of Joseph of Arimathea, which is related in the Gospel of Nicodemus, has led to the belief that this work is, or was originally, the same book with the Acts of Pilate. But the argument would in no case avail to prove this identity, since the author of the Gospel of Nicodemus may, equally with Gregory, have derived the story, directly or indirectly, from some book which bore that title. It may even be that Gregory himself furnished him with the germ of his fable.

Here two questions arise: What was the original meaning of that title, "The Acts of Pilate"? and how must it be understood in relation to the subject before us?

The accounts which the Roman provincial governors were accustomed to send to the emperor of their own doings, and of remarkable events in their respective provinces, were sometimes called Acts (*Acta* in Latin, or, as written in Greek letters, Ἀκτα). There can be little doubt that Pilate did send home such an account relating to Jesus. Rumors concerning him must have reached Rome; and his reputed miracles and claims, and the circumstances connected with his history and death, were not matters to be passed over in silence in the reports of a procurator who was under the eye of Tiberius.

Accordingly, Justin and Tertullian, in their Apologies, refer briefly in general terms to the account of Pilate, which Justin calls his Acts, as confirming their statements respecting the miracles and death of Jesus. But it is not probable that either of them had seen an authentic copy of those Acts, or that such copies were ever in circulation. They either spoke from private information, direct or indirect, or perhaps inferred, from the nature of the case, that the account given by Pilate must tend to confirm their own.

In the beginning of the fourth century, according to the relation of Eusebius (*Hist. Eccles.*, lib. ix. c. 5: *conf lib. i. cc 9, 11*), during the persecution under Maximin, pretended Acts of Pilate, full of calumnies against our Lord, were fabricated and zealously circulated.

Afterward, as we learn from Epiphanius (*Hæres.*, l. Opp i. 420), there were extant among Christians, in the fourth century, other spurious Acts of

really believed? How was it with the mythology and marvels of Greek and Roman Paganism, interwoven as they were with the religious sentiments and rites and daily usages of

Pilate, which were appealed to by certain heretics, in proof that our Lord suffered on the eighth of the Calends of April, the anniversary of which day they commemorated. Epiphanius says (but whether truly or not may be a question) that he had seen copies of those Acts giving a different date. The author of a Homily ascribed to Chrysostom (*Chrysostomi Opp* v. 942, ed. Savil) says that the day of our Lord's death was known, from the Acts of Pilate, to be the eighth of the Calends of April. The same date is also found in the Gospel of Nicodemus.

This is the sum of all the information concerning any real or pretended Acts of Pilate furnished by all the writers before Gregory of Tours

No one can be supposed to imagine, that the Gospel of Nicodemus is either the authentic Acts of Pilate referred to by Justin and Tertullian, or those spurious Acts which were put into circulation during the persecution under Maximin.\* It follows, that those who believe the Gospel to be the same book with the Acts must believe it to be the Acts of which Epiphanius speaks, of the contents of which we know nothing, except that they specified a particular day as that of our Lord's death.

But this belief must be entertained in opposition to the clear and decisive evidence furnished by the book itself.

The Greek Gospel published by Thilo begins with a statement that the Hebrew original was found and translated into Greek in the seventeenth year of Theodosius, the first or second of that name. At the end of the Latin version edited by Fabricius, Theodosius the Great is said to have discovered it in the Prætorium of Pilate at Jerusalem, which extraordinary story shows that the times of Theodosius must have been to the author of this version a fabulous age. No copy of the work assigns an earlier date for its discovery.

But no one will credit the fable of the Hebrew original of the book. The Greek text is the original; and this, it appears, claims for itself no higher antiquity than the end of the fourth century or the beginning of the fifth. It is probably of much later date. But, on its own showing, it could not have been the book quoted, as Epiphanius reports, under the name of "The Acts of Pilate," by heretics in the fourth century.

The character of the Gospel of Nicodemus is such as to render the supposition utterly incredible, that any one could have put it forth under the name of "The Acts of Pilate;" that title being understood, as it undoubtedly was during the first four centuries, to denote an official account of his doings concerning Jesus sent by Pilate to the emperor. It has nothing of the nature or form of an official communication. It is a legendary fable. There is no inscription to Tiberius, nor any address to him throughout the book.

the most enlightened nations of antiquity? Had the Egyptians a true faith that a particular bull was their god Apis? Did they believe in the divinity of the Crocodile and the Ibis? What was their state of mind in respect to their other gods, — *qualia demens Ægyptus portenta colebat*, — with all the strange and disgusting histories attached to them? How has it been with the Hindus, one of the few nations out of the European family which have approached to European intelligence? Have they believed or not the enormous fables — that even a healthy imagination shrinks from — which are reported as true in their sacred books? How much of the history of human opinions on all the higher subjects of thought is a history of human errors, — often of errors the most repulsive to reason, yet widely prevailing, and obstinately maintained from century to century! Have not those errors been believed?

The general answer to be given to these questions embraces the particular reply to the inquiry by which they were suggested, respecting the fables of the Protevangelion and of the Books of the Infancy. Throughout the history of mankind, we find, as regards both facts and doctrines, the broadest exhibitions of credulity, which, if the delusion have

Nor is it pretended in the book itself that Pilate was its author. According to its own statement, it was composed by Nicodemus. In the Greek copies, there is no mention of Pilate as having any thing to do with it. Nor does it appear, that the title, "Acts of Pilate," was given it in any manuscript, Greek or Latin. In an addition made in Latin copies (Thilo, p. 788), it is said, that Pilate, having been informed by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus of all that passed in the Jewish Sanhedrim, "wrote all which had been done and said by the Jews concerning Jesus (*omnia quæ gesta et dicta sunt de Jesu a Judæis*), and put all the words in the public books of his Prætorium." This story, and the words "*omnia quæ gesta*," may perhaps have countenanced the error of calling it the Acts of Pilate (*Gesta Pilati*). But the only title which could with any plausibility be derived from the passage would be "Acts of the Jews" (*Gesta Judæorum*), meaning, in a sense of the word *Gesta* familiar in the Middle Ages, "Deeds (or Doings) of the Jews." — *Note to Second Edition*, 1847.

passed away, or if we are out of the sphere of its influence, we can hardly help regarding as monstrous and unnatural, till we recollect how prevalent they have been, and consequently how consistent with our common nature. There are other avenues, more trodden than the narrow way of reason, by which opinions enter the mind. What impresses the imagination, affects the feelings, and is blended with habitual associations, is received by the generality as true. Fables however absurd, conceptions however irrational, even unmeaning forms of words, which have been early presented to the mind, and with which it has been long conversant, make as vivid an impression upon it as realities, and assume their character. No opinions inhere more strongly than those about which the reason is not exercised; for they are unsailable by argument. It would be well to have different words to distinguish between the two different states of mind, in the one of which we receive conceptions as true without reasoning, while in the other our assent is given through an exercise of judgment. The term *to credit* is now used in one of its significations merely as synonymous with the term *to believe*. We might confine the use of the former term to denoting the first kind of assent, — assent without the exercise of the understanding; and employ the latter only to signify a faith that relies on reason. Using the words in these senses, we might say that the mass of errors which have been *credited* bears a vast disproportion to the amount of truths which have been *believed*. Nor shall we find it hard to conceive, nor regard it as a very extraordinary fact, that the fables respecting the mother of our Lord and our Lord himself have been *credited*, as well as the doctrine of transubstantiation. Undoubtedly the world has grown wiser; or, rather, a small portion of the world has grown wiser; and we may hope that the light will become less troubled, steadier, and brighter, and spread itself more widely. *Aliud ex alio clarescet. Res accendent lumina rebus.*

From what has appeared in this chapter, it is evident that the Gnostics did not oppose to the four Gospels any other history of Christ's ministry; or, to state the conclusion in more general terms, it is evident, that, during the first three centuries, no history of Christ's ministry at variance with the four Gospels was in existence. The history of his ministry, such as it is contained in them, or in some one of them, served as a common basis for the opinions of all Christians, both catholic and heretical.

If the Gospel of the Hebrews, in its uncorrupted state, was, as we have seen reason to believe, the Gospel of Matthew, then there is no probability that any work besides those of the evangelists, professing to be an original history of our Lord's ministry, was ever in circulation after the appearance of the first three Gospels, — somewhere, probably, about the year 65. Luke mentions imperfect accounts which preceded his own. But, after the appearance of the first three Gospels, though the copies of such accounts might not be destroyed, they would cease to be multiplied and circulated. We accordingly find no trace of their existence subsequent to the notice of them by Luke.

It may seem again as if nothing further were to be said; but, in order to exhaust the general subject we are considering, a few more remarks remain to be made concerning some supposed gospels, formerly mentioned, which Eichhorn maintains to have been in common use during the second century previously to the use of the catholic Gospels, or even to the existence of the latter in their present state.\* I have already had occasion to take notice of all the titles which he enumerates, except two. These two, to which we will now attend, are "gospels used by Tatian in composing his Diatessaron," and "The Gospel of Cerinthus."†

\* See p. 61-62: comp p. 5, seqq.

† *Cerinthi Evangelium*. Eichhorn's *Einleit. in das N.T.*, i. 107.

Tatian, the disciple of Justin Martyr, and the contemporary of Irenæus, became an ascetic, and a Gnostic of the Valentinian school. Respecting his Diatessaron, Theodoret, as we have formerly remarked,\* speaks of his having found two hundred copies of it among the Christians of his diocese, which he removed, and supplied their place by copies of the Gospels. He says, "Tatian put together what is called 'The Gospel out of the Four'" (that is, a gospel composed out of the four Gospels, a Diatessaron), "cutting away the genealogies, and all else which shows that the Lord was born of the race of David according to the flesh. And this book is used, not only by those of his sect, but by those who adhere to the doctrines of the apostles; they not knowing the fraud in its composition, but using it, in their simplicity, as a compendious book."† It is evident, that Theodoret, with the book before his eyes, regarded it as a history of Christ compiled from the four Gospels; nor does he object any thing to it but the omissions which he specifies. Eusebius gives the same account of the composition of the book from the four Gospels; remarking in connection, that the Encratites (of which sect, he says, Tatian was the founder) used the Gospels.‡ But, in opposition to all testimony and probability, it was fancied by Eichhorn that Tatian did not use our present four Gospels, but four others very like them,§—so like them, it appears, that they were mistaken for them. There is not a sufficient show of argument in support of this conjecture to admit of any particular confutation. It may be worth while to discuss it, when the supposition can be rendered plausible, that, in the time of Irenæus, simultaneously with our four Gospels, four other gospels existed very like them, but not the same. ||

\* See p. 32.

† Hæret. Fab, lib i n. 20, Opp iv. 208.

‡ Hist. Eccles., lib. iv. c. 29.

§ Einleit. in das N.T., i. 110-113.

|| "Tatian's Gospel," says Eichhorn, "was called by many the Gospel of the Hebrews;" and he asks, "Whence could this name have arisen, except

The Diatessaron of Tatian, then, is one among the abundant proofs which the theosophic Gnostics made of the four Gospels, and of the authority which they ascribed to them.

We proceed to the supposed gospel of Cerinthus. Eichhorn quotes, concerning this, two passages from Epiphanius, who is his sole authority.

That writer, in his account of the Cerinthians, affirms that they "used the Gospel of Matthew, not complete, however, but in part only;"\* and, in his account of the Ebionites, he says that Cerinthus used the same Gospel of Matthew with the Ebionites, except that he retained the genealogy for the purpose of proving from it that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary.†

Regarding Epiphanius as a trustworthy writer, and as being alone a sufficient representative of Christian antiquity, Eichhorn asserts that "*it is undeniable that Christian anti-*

from the circumstance that that gospel served for its basis?" The only authority for his assertion is a passage of Epiphanius.

Epiphanius, as his text now stands, says (Hæres., xlv § 1, Opp i. 391), "From Tatian, those who are called Encratites derive their origin, partaking of the same venom; and it is said that 'The Gospel out of the Four,' which some call 'The Gospel according to the Hebrews,' was made by him." But there can be no doubt that the Diatessaron of Tatian and the Gospel of the Hebrews were very different books; and the supposition that the Hebrew Gospel of the Jewish Christians was written in Greek by a Gnostic, toward the close of the second century, is too gross an absurdity for any one to have entertained. Nor is there the least probability that the title of "The Gospel according to the Hebrews" was ever common to the book to which it properly belonged and to Tatian's Diatessaron. If the text of Epiphanius be correct, his assertion can only be reckoned as one among his numberless blunders. But it seems most probable, that his text is corrupt; and that, instead of κατὰ Ἑβραίων, "according to the Hebrews," we should read κατὰ Ἐγκρατῆτας, "according to the Encratites." This will accord with his speaking of Tatian's Diatessaron in immediate connection with his mention of the Encratites as deriving their origin from him. They, of course, were likely to make particular use of his Diatessaron; and this therefore might naturally be called by some "The Gospel according to the Encratites."

\* Hæres., xxviii. § 5, p. 113.

† Hæres., xxx. § 14, p. 138.

*quity* ascribed to Cerinthus the use of Matthew's Gospel, but with a shorter text;"\* and he infers that the Gospel of Cerinthus was an earlier gospel than that of Matthew; that is to say, the Gospel which we now call Matthew's in a yet imperfect state.†

It is needless to inquire by what process this might be inferred from the words of Epiphanius, supposing him to be a writer of good authority. As we have formerly seen,‡ he is entitled to no credit in his account of the Cerinthians. He has manufactured a sect, to which, ascribing the doctrines of the Ebionites, he has likewise ascribed the use of the Gospel of the Ebionites.

But there is another passage of Epiphanius, which Eichhorn has omitted to notice. It is in his account of the Alogi. "Luke," he says, in the first words of his Gospel, "since many have undertaken," — that is, to write gospels, — "points to some undertakers, as Cerinthus, Merinthus, and others."§ He had before told us that Cerinthus and his followers used the Gospel of Matthew, with some omissions. He here tells

\* Einleit in das N.T., i. 110 — It may be worth while here to take notice of what we might call an extraordinary oversight of Eichhorn, if such oversights did not often occur in the works of the modern theologians of Germany. Cerinthus is represented, by all the ancient writers who pretend to give an account of him, as teaching that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary. But Eichhorn, after quoting his authority, Epiphanius, to this effect, proceeds, a few lines after (p. 108), to observe, that, as the gospel of Cerinthus had the genealogy of Jesus, so "it probably had also the whole *evangelium infantis* (gospel of the infancy) which is now contained in the first two chapters of Matthew." That is to say, Eichhorn supposes, that, though Cerinthus rejected the belief of the miraculous conception of our Lord, he received the account of it as authentic.

It is by conjectures which have more or less of a like character, and by critics equally inconsiderate, that the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels have been assailed in modern times in Germany. Among those critics, I know of none who is to be ranked higher than Eichhorn for theological knowledge, clearness of mind, and power of reasoning.

† Einleit in das N.T., i. 109.

‡ See pp. 199, 200.

§ Hæres., li. § 7, p. 428.



us that Cerinthus wrote a gospel before Luke wrote his. Following him, therefore, as a well-informed and credible writer, and putting his different accounts together, we must conclude that Cerinthus was the original composer of Matthew's Gospel. Reasoning after a fashion with which every one acquainted with modern German theology must be familiar, we might go on to infer, as highly probable, that Merinthus was the author of the Gospel of Mark. But here we should be met by a difficulty, arising from what Epiphanius elsewhere says, that he did not know whether Cerinthus and Merinthus were different persons, or only different names of the same person.\* But the existence of the very early gospel of Merinthus, which, I believe, no one has yet undertaken to patronize, rests on as good ground as that of the gospel of Cerinthus.

In pursuing the inquiry concerning the supposed existence of Gnostic gospels, we have enabled ourselves to form a correct judgment of the character and importance of all those books which have been called apocryphal gospels, and of their bearing on the genuineness and authenticity of those four books which in ancient times were universally recognized as the original histories of Christ's ministry, given by his immediate followers, or those who derived their knowledge from them. On the subject of apocryphal gospels, there have been vague and incorrect notions, that have continued, in one form or other, down to our time, among those who have been disposed to invalidate the authority of the four Gospels. They cannot, perhaps, be more clearly or more briefly explained than in the words of the Jew Orobio, in his celebrated controversy with Limborch respecting the truth of Christianity. "There were," he says, "besides the four Gospels many others, some of which are referred to by

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\* Hæres., xxviii. § 8, p. 115.

Jerome\* and other fathers, which were the foundation of different heresies. Such were the gospel to the Egyptians, that to the Hebrews, that of Thomas, that of Bartholomew,† that of the Twelve Apostles,‡ that of Basilides, that of Harpocras,§ and others that it would be superfluous to mention, every one of which had its adherents, and gave occasion to dispute. All these gospels, conflicting with one another in regard to the truth of the history, were in the course of time, and by the authority of councils, rejected; the four only being admitted in Europe, as corresponding best with each other.”|| On the ground of such statements, it has been argued, in effect, that there were originally many various accounts of Christ's ministry, differing much from one another, so that the truth was altogether unsettled; and that our four Gospels, which had no particular claim to credit, obtained general currency, to the exclusion of other works of the same kind, in consequence only of their finding favor with the prevalent party among Christians, and hence being sanctioned by the decrees of councils. Respecting this supposition, it is here unnecessary to recur to that evidence for the universal reception of the four Gospels by the great body of Christians, which shows it to be altogether untenable. In the present

\* The imperfect and erroneous view of the subject taken by Orobio is sufficiently evident from this reference to Jerome. Books which could have come into competition with the four Gospels must have been very conspicuous books long before the time of Jerome.

† This title is first mentioned by Jerome in his Proem to Matthew's Gospel. The existence of any book answering to it is doubtful.

‡ This was another title for the Gospel of the Hebrews. See before, p 369, note.

§ By Harpocras must, it would seem, be meant Carpocrates; and Orobio probably had in mind an indistinct recollection of the story of Epiphanius (*Hæres*, xxx. § 14, p 138), that Carpocrates used the Gospel of Matthew, corrupted, in common with the Ebionites. Except this title, and that of “The Gospel of Bartholomew,” the others enumerated by Orobio have been already remarked upon.

|| The passage is quoted by Fabricius, i. 146.

chapter, we have examined, or adverted to, every book, real or supposed, passing under the name of a gospel, the title of which is mentioned by any writer before Epiphanius. Among them are the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of Marcion. The existence of neither of these books can weaken the proof of the authority and general reception of the four Gospels. But it would be idle to suppose that any other of those which have been mentioned was brought into competition with the four Gospels as a different history of Christ's ministry; and still more idle to suppose this of any book, the very title of which is not mentioned till after the middle of the fourth century.\*

The main purpose of our inquiry respecting the Gnostics has been to determine whether they afford evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels. That they do afford such evidence has abundantly appeared. But something remains to be said. In the next chapter, we shall conclude with bringing into one view the facts already adduced, in connection with others not yet adverted to, and attending to the relations and bearings of the whole.

\* A degree of confusion and misapprehension respecting the subject of apocryphal gospels may have been produced by the fact, that Fabricius gives an account of such gospels under fifty titles, which, as the same book sometimes passed under two or more different titles, he supposes may represent about forty books (i. 335,\* note). But in making this collection he has taken a very wide range. He has included writings which have no claim to the title of "gospel," either in the ancient or modern sense of the word; and he has brought his catalogue down to the year 1600, mentioning a History of Christ in Persian, published that year by the missionary Jerome Xavier, for the benefit of his converts. Many of the titles collected by him rest on no good authority. Some evidently had their origin in ignorance and misapprehension. With the exception of those which have been remarked upon, they are to be found only in writers from Epiphanius downward. Their alphabetical arrangement, however, tends, at first view, to give the impression, that one deserves as much attention as another. But, of the works mentioned by Fabricius, all that can with any reason be supposed to have been extant before the middle of the third century have been taken notice of in this chapter.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CONCLUDING STATEMENT OF THE EVIDENCE FOR THE GENUINENESS OF THE GOSPELS AFFORDED BY THE Gnostics.

THE facts that have been brought forward show in what manner the Gospels were regarded by the Gnostics. It has appeared, that the theosophic Gnostics recognized the authority of the four Gospels in common with the catholic Christians ; while the Gospel used by the Marcionites was essentially the same with the Gospel of Luke. But we will now review those facts in connection with some others which have not yet been stated, and consider more particularly what inferences may be drawn from the whole. In pursuing the subject, we will first confine our attention to the Marcionites.

An unjustifiable application of a principle common to all the Gnostics \* led the Marcionites to reject certain passages from the text of Luke, and to decline any appeal to the authority of the three remaining Gospels. But the very principle on which they proceeded, that the apostles and their followers were under the influence of Jewish prejudices, implies that they recognized the genuineness of the passages, and of the Gospels, which they rejected. It may be further remarked, that their having recourse to the mutilation of

\* See before, p 332, seqq.

Luke's Gospel shows that no other history of Christ's ministry existed more favorable to their doctrines; that in the first half of the second century, when Marcion lived, there was no Gnostic gospel in being, to which he could appeal.

The fact, that Marcion's gospel was founded on that of Luke, proves the existence and authority of Luke's Gospel at the time when Marcion lived. We may therefore recur to the reasoning which has before been used, to show that the existence and authority of any one of the four Gospels at a particular period implies the contemporaneous existence and authority of the other three.\* In proving their genuineness, if that reasoning be correct, they may be regarded as virtually one book. Had any other of the Gospels not existed together with that of Luke at the commencement of the second century, or had it not then been regarded as of authority, it never could afterward have attained to the high estimation in which Luke's Gospel was held.

We will next attend to the broad distinction that was made between the Marcionites and the theosophic Gnostics in consequence of the fact, that the Marcionites admitted, as of authority among the Gospels, only their mutilated copy of Luke. On this ground Irenæus, as we have seen,† declined controverting their opinions in connection with those of the other Gnostics; and Tertullian, in confuting them, expressly limited himself to the use of their own gospel. The distinction was, that the Marcionites recognized only the authority of their own gospel; while the other Gnostics, as is thus testified by their opponents, appealed equally with the catholic Christians to the authority of all the four Gospels.

This is the concession of their opponents. But we will go on, and see what further evidence of the fact exists.

I have repeatedly had occasion to refer to the letter of

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\* See pp. 102-107.

† p. 209

Ptolemy, the Valentinian, to Flora, in which he gives an account of his doctrines respecting the Supreme Being and the Creator. In this letter he says, that he shall prove what he asserts "by the words of the Saviour, which only are an infallible guide to the apprehension of the truth;" and he accordingly confirms his positions throughout by quotations from the Gospels. In the conclusion of the letter, he introduces the mention of those apostolic traditions to which the Gnostics appealed, but speaks of them only as an additional and subordinate means of knowledge. He promises to give further explanations, founded "on the doctrine of the apostles received by tradition; every thing at the same time being confirmed by the teaching of the Saviour, which must be taken as the standard" Heracleon, another Valentinian, who lived in the second century, and was highly esteemed, as we are told, by those of his own sect, wrote a commentary on the Gospel of John, which is often quoted by Origen. The views of the Basilidians respecting the Gospels may be inferred from the fact, that Basilides himself wrote a commentary on the Gospels.\* Tatian, who was a Gnostic, composed, as we have seen, a Harmony of the Gospels.† And, in the *Doctrina Orientalis*, the Gnostic writer appeals to the Gospels to countenance his opinions as freely as a catholic Christian might have done, and appeals to no other history of Christ. It is throughout to be kept in mind, that the theosophic Gnostics, while they thus used the Gospels, used no other books of the same class as of like authority; that they did not, any more than the catholic Christians, bring any other history of Christ's ministry into competition with them.

In treating of the doctrines of the theosophic Gnostics, I have incidentally given examples of the use made by them

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\* See before, pp. 352, 353.

† See before, pp. 385-387.

of passages of the Gospels. Many more might be adduced. But a particular enumeration of passages to which they appealed is unnecessary, since their use of the Gospels is fully acknowledged by their catholic opponents.

Irenæus begins his work by charging them with deceiving men by "corrupting the oracles of the Lord, being evil interpreters of what has been well spoken." \* He often remarks on their ingenuity in perverting the Scriptures. Speaking particularly of the Valentinians, he says, "You see the method they use to deceive themselves, wresting the Scriptures, and endeavoring to find support in them for their fictions." † He gives connectedly many passages from the Gospels, which they applied to the proof of their doctrines, and afterwards confutes their interpretations. ‡ He speaks of them as making use of every part of the Gospel of John. § I have already quoted a passage, in which he says, that those heretics, in putting together detached passages of Scripture, resemble one who should separate the stones of a mosaic representing a king, and employ them to make the figure of a fox or a dog; || and another, in which he compares their abundant use of Scripture language to the labor of one stringing together verses of Homer to form a cento. ¶ "There is such assurance," he says, "concerning the Gospels, that the heretics themselves bear testimony to them, and every one of them endeavors to prove his doctrine from them. . . . As, then, those who oppose us bear testimony in our favor, and use these Gospels, it follows that what we have shown that the Gospels teach is established and true." \*\*

"There could not be heresies," says Tertullian, "if the

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\* Lib. i. Prefat., § 1, p. 2.

† Lib. i. c. 9, § 1, p. 43.

‡ Lib. i. cc. 8, 9, pp. 35-47.

§ Lib. iii. c. 11, § 7, p. 190.

|| Lib. i. c. 8, § 1, p. 36.

¶ Lib. i. c. 9, § 4, pp. 45, 46. Tertullian uses the same comparison, *De Præscript. Hæretic.*, c. 39, p. 216.

\*\* Lib. iii. c. 11 § 7, pp. 189, 190.

Scriptures were incapable of being misinterpreted.”\*—“They could not venture to show themselves without some pretence from the Scriptures.”†—“The heretics plead their cause from the Scriptures, and draw their arguments from the Scriptures. Whence, indeed, could they draw their arguments concerning the subjects of faith, except from the books of the faith?”‡

It appears, then, that the theosophic Gnostics abundantly appealed to the Scriptures, and particularly to the Gospels, in support of their opinions. The passages I have quoted, and others of a similar character, are not to be considered as mere common testimony to this fact. They are the admissions of their opponents. So far as there was any ground for it, the catholic Christians were eager to charge the Gnostics with mutilating, rejecting, and undervaluing the writings of the New Testament. In the case of the Marcionites, this accusation was strongly urged. But, as respects the theosophic Gnostics, we have the testimony of the earliest and most elaborate writers against them, of Irenæus and Tertullian, that they made use of the Gospels, and other writings of the New Testament, and constantly appealed to them for proof of their doctrines, as freely as the catholic Christians.

The Marcionites made similar use of those portions of the New Testament the authority of which they admitted. This is abundantly apparent from Tertullian's whole controversy with them; and might be inferred simply from the fact, that they did acknowledge the authority of those portions which they retained.

But the evidence which has been brought forward of the facts just stated, however conclusive, is not perhaps the most striking that may be adduced. There is a remarkable work

\* De Resurrectione Carnis, c. 40, p. 349.

† Ibid., c. 63, p. 365.

‡ De Præscript. Hæret., c. 14, p. 207.



of Tertullian, entitled "*De Præscriptione Hæreticorum.*" The word *præscriptio*, used in this title, was a forensic term, denoting an exception taken by a defendant to the plaintiff's right to maintain an action. The title of Tertullian's work might be rendered, "On the Plea in Bar against the Heretics." Its purpose is to show that the heretics should not be allowed to argue their cause from the Scriptures. The position which he maintains is, that the history of the catholic doctrine, and of the doctrines of the heretics, alone determines the former to be true, and the latter false, without further inquiry. His argument proceeds as follows:—

Christ, whoever he was, of whatever God he was the son, whatever was the substance of his divine and of his human nature, whatever faith he taught, whatever rewards he promised, declared, while on earth, what he was, what he had been, the will of his Father, and the duty of man, either publicly to the people, or apart to his disciples. He sent forth his apostles, who had been chosen by him for this purpose, to preach to the world the same doctrine which he had taught. They founded churches in every city where they went, from which other churches had been and were still derived. These all traced back their origin to the apostles, and formed one great apostolic Church, held together in brotherhood by the reception of the same religion handed down to all.

But, if Christ gave authority to his apostles to preach his religion, no other expositors of it are to be listened to. What they preached is what he revealed; and, in order to ascertain what they preached, we must recur to the churches which they founded, and instructed orally and by their epistles. Whatever doctrine is held by those churches is true, as derived from the apostles, and through them from Christ, and through Christ from God. Every other doctrine is false. But we, says Tertullian, hold communion with the apostolic churches; there is no difference of belief between us

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and them ; and this is the proof of the truth of our doctrines.\*

The argument stated in its most concise form, it will be perceived, is this, — that it was matter of history that the catholic churches had, from the days of the apostles, held the same doctrines as they did in the time of Tertullian ; and that these doctrines, therefore, were the original doctrines of the religion derived through the apostles from Christ. It was equally a matter of history, he continues, that the founders of the principal heretical sects, Valentinus and Marcion, for instance, had lived after the times of the apostles, and had introduced new doctrines not before held by the churches. If their doctrines were true, the churches had before been in error from the beginning. “Thousands of thousands had been baptized into a false religion.” — “Let them show me,” says Tertullian, “by what authority they have come forward. . . . Let them prove themselves to be new apostles ; let them affirm that Christ has again descended, has again taught, has again been crucified, has again died, and has risen again. It was thus that he formed his apostles ; giving them, moreover, the power of working the same miracles which he did. I wish them to produce their miracles.” †

The main scope of the reasoning of Tertullian is apparent. It is, he maintains, a well-known historical fact, that the catholic doctrine, as opposed to that of the Gnostics, has been held from the beginning by the churches which the apostles founded, and by all other churches in communion with them. This fact precludes the necessity of any further argument with those heretics. They have no claim to be heard in appealing to the Scriptures in support of their opinions.

Tertullian remarks at length upon the various objections which were made to his argument by different individuals, or

\* Cc. 20, 21, pp. 208, 209.

† Cc. 29, 30, pp. 212, 213.

by the same at different times. All of them, it may be observed, are founded on passages of the New Testament. With the exception of the last to be here mentioned, they have already been spoken of. The Gnostics sometimes said, that the apostles did not know all things ; \* sometimes, that the apostles had a public and a private doctrine, and did not communicate all truths openly to all ; † and, finally, they contended, that the catholic churches, from the earliest times, had fallen into error through not understanding what the apostles taught.

It is not necessary to dwell on the answers of Tertullian to these objections. His main argument, considering the early period when it was adduced, and its application as against the doctrines of the Gnostics, is evidently conclusive. I have given this brief account of it for the purpose of introducing the reason which he assigns for urging it. This reason is, that in the controversy between the catholic Christians and the Gnostics, when the Gnostics were allowed to appeal to the Scriptures in proof of their doctrines, they argued so plausibly as to leave the victory uncertain ; to make converts of some, and to instil doubts into others.

“ We come, then,” he says, “ to the subject proposed.” — “ Our opponents put forward the Scriptures, and their boldness has an immediate effect upon some. In the first encounter, they fatigue the strong, they take captive the weak, and dismiss others with doubts. Here, then, I meet them at the onset: they are not to be admitted to argue from the Scriptures.” ‡

“ Will he for the sake of whose doubts you engage in an argument from the Scriptures, be inclined in consequence more to the truth or to heresy? When he sees that you make no advance; that, the other party maintaining his ground, you both equally deny and defend, — he will surely go away from this conflict more

\* See before, pp 332, 333.

† See before, pp. 327–332.

‡ Cap. 15, p 207.

uncertain than before, and ignorant on which side the heresy lies." \*

"The appeal, therefore, is not to be made to the Scriptures, nor is the decision of the controversy to be rested on them; for they will afford no victory, or an uncertain one, or one no better than uncertain. Even though the mutual appeal to Scripture should not leave each party on an equality,† yet the order of things demands that that consideration should be first brought forward which is the sole subject of the present argument, — To whom does the faith [the religion] itself belong? Whose are the Scriptures? From whom, and through whom, and when, and to whom, was the instruction delivered, by which men are made Christians? For, wherever it may appear that the true Christian instruction and faith are to be found, there will be the true Scriptures, and their true exposition, and all true Christian traditions." ‡

Thus it appears, that, whatever difficulties the theosophic Gnostics found in reconciling their doctrines with the New Testament, they recognized the necessity of doing so; that they were ready to meet their opponents on this ground; that they furnished plausible explanations of those difficulties, and drew from the New Testament plausible arguments in their own favor. But this is but a partial statement. The theosophic Gnostics appealed to the Gospels as freely and as confidently as did the catholic Christians; contending that they alone had the true key to their meaning, and that other Christians, not being spiritual, could not comprehend their hidden and higher senses. They believed, indeed, that the apostles and evangelists were not infallible; that they were liable to human errors, and that they were affected by prejudices and false opinions, common to their countrymen, which had been implanted in their minds in childhood, had grown with their growth, and had not been wholly eradicated. But

\* Cap. 18, p. 208.

† I adopt the reading, "ut utramque partem parem sisteret."

‡ Cal. 19, p. 208.

the theosophic Gnostics, who allegorized and spiritualized the words of the Gospels, had not the same occasion to misapply this principle as the Marcionites, who were not allegorists. The Marcionites regarded the Gospels as colored throughout by the Jewish prejudices of their writers. But, by taking the work of him whom they considered as the most enlightened of the evangelists, St. Luke, and rejecting from it some errors, they thought themselves able to obtain a history altogether correct; and this was the basis of their system.

Still, had any seemingly credible history of Christ's ministry existed, more favorable to the opinions of the Gnostics than the four Gospels, there can be no doubt that they would have used that history in preference. The manner, therefore, in which they appealed to the four Gospels, or to the history of Christ as contained in the Gospel of Luke, without bringing any Gnostic history into competition with them, is proof that no such history existed. All Christians, the catholics, the theosophic Gnostics, the Marcionites, and, as we have before seen, the Hebrew Christians, were equally ignorant of any history of Christ's ministry different from that given by the evangelists. No party relied on any other: no party had any other to produce.

But it has been suggested, or implied, that the early founders of the Gnostic sects drew their systems from their philosophy, and connected them only with some general belief that the coming of Christ was a manifestation of the Supreme God for the purpose of delivering men from moral evil and its consequences; and that it was merely by way of reasoning *ad hominem* with the catholic Christians, that the Gnostics made use of the Gospels.\* Let us try the probabil-

\* See, for example, Walch's *Historie der Ketzereien*, i. 374; Matter, *Histoire du Gnosticisme*, ii. 172, 190.

ity of this supposition by applying it to a particular case, — that of the Valentinians.

We have seen, that the Valentinians so fully, and in such various ways, professed their belief in the truth of the Gospels, that their opponents did not accuse them of denying it; though this charge would unquestionably have been brought against them, had there been a foundation for it. But they made use of the Gospels, it may be said, not in good faith; they quoted them only “to satisfy those who demanded proofs from Scripture,”\* or undertook to explain them by way of answering the objections of those who regarded the Gospels as of authority. The statements already made show that these suppositions have no probability to recommend them; but let us examine a little farther. According to this hypothesis, the Valentinians did not believe the authenticity and genuineness of the Gospels; they did not sincerely recognize their authority; they did not believe them to favor their own opinions; and, consequently, they did not believe them to teach what they thought true Christianity. At the same time, it is evident that these books were principally relied on by their opponents as a storehouse of arguments against them. We have, indeed, no reason to doubt that there was a foundation for the strong language which has been quoted from Tertullian, respecting their skilful and successful use of the Scriptures. We may believe that the Gnostics sometimes made converts from among the catholic Christians, and showed much talent, after the fashion of their times, in reconciling their doctrines with the New Testament, and in persuading themselves and others that they were indicated in the parables or supported by the declarations of Christ, as recorded in the Gospels. But, after all, it is evident that the Gospels do not teach the Gnostic doctrines, but do teach what is irreconcilable with those doctrines. It is

\* Walch, *ubi supra*.

equally certain, that this fact was recognized by a great majority of early believers (for the catholic Christians far outnumbered the Gnostics), and even by a very large and respectable portion of the Gnostics themselves, the Marcionites, as appears from the expedient to which they had recourse, of rejecting the use of three of the Gospels, and mutilating that which they retained. Would the Valentinians, then, have professed to regard those books as authentic, had there been good reasons for questioning their authenticity? Is it credible, that they would, with such a consistent show of conviction as to deceive and silence their opponents, have professed their belief in the truth of the Gospels, had they not believed them true? So far from it, they would at once have seized on the triumph, or at least the advantage, which was evidently in their power, could the genuineness and authority of the books relied on by their opponents have been fairly denied or fairly questioned. The course to be pursued would have been clear; and neither an honest man, nor a controvertist of common ability, could have neglected to take it. The Valentinians, and the other theosophic Gnostics, would not have persisted in dishonestly affirming or implying their belief of the authenticity of books which they did not believe to be authentic, and which furnished their opponents with arguments against their doctrines, conclusive in themselves, and by most regarded as conclusive.

Let us view the subject under another aspect. The Gospels were either known to Valentinus himself, or they were not. If they were known to him, they were either regarded by him as genuine and authentic, or they were not. He lived at so early an age, in the first half of the second century, that no question could have existed in his time, whether they were entitled to that character. The fact must have been known, either that they were, or that they were not, entitled to it. If he regarded them as genuine and authentic, there can be no doubt that they were so regarded by his followers,

and by the great body of contemporary Christians ; and our inquiry is at an end. Let us suppose, then, either that they were not known to him, that they were not in existence, or that, being known to him, they were rejected by him as unworthy of credit. In either case, he built his system on other foundations, and supported it by other arguments, than what those books might afford. In either case, it is evident that his followers would never have admitted or implied the truth of the Gospels. They would never have consented to receive, as genuine and authentic, books not known to their master, or which he had rejected, — books which they themselves must have believed to be the fabrications of opponents who had excluded him and them from their community, and which furnished those opponents with the strongest arguments against what they regarded as true Christianity. They would not have exposed themselves to such expostulations as those of Tertullian : “ If they are heretics, they are not Christians, not deriving their doctrine from Christ. . . . Not being Christians, they have no property in the books of Christians. It may justly be said to them, Who are you ? When and whence did you come ? What are you, who do not belong to me, doing on my premises ? By what right, Marcion, do you cut down my woods ? By what license, Valentinus, do you divert the water of my springs ? By what authority, Apelles, are you removing my landmarks ? How is it, that you others are sowing and pasturing here at your pleasure ? It is my possession ; I have possessed it of old ; I trace back my title to its original source ; I am heir of the apostles.” \* To such language it would have required neither an acute nor an angry controvertist to give the answer, that this disputed possession was not worth claiming, could such an answer have been given with truth.

\* De Præscript. Hæretic., c. 37, p. 215.



In examining (in the Second Part of this work) the direct historical evidence of the genuineness of the Gospels, we have seen, that it does not mainly consist, as in the case of other books, of assertions and implications of individual writers concerning their authorship. It rests on the fact, that they were universally received, as the works of those to whom they are ascribed, by the great body of catholic Christians, at so early a period that no mistake on the subject could have been committed; and on another consideration of equal weight, that this general reception of the Gospels as genuine, wherever Christianity had been preached, is a phenomenon which can be accounted for only on the supposition of their genuineness.

But, in turning from the catholic Christians to the Gnostics, it might not be unreasonable to apprehend, considering the opposition in which the two parties stood to each other, that something would appear to cloud the testimony of the former, and perhaps to shake our confidence in it as conclusive. Certainly, had there been, during the first ages of Christianity, any doubt concerning the genuineness of the Gospels, we should have learned it from the Gnostics. But, so far from any doubt being suggested by the examination which we have gone through, we find the Gnostics strongly confirming the testimony of their catholic opponents. Valentinus and Basilides carry us back to the earlier part of the second century;\* and they, in common with the catholic Christians, received the Gospels as the authentic histories of the ministry of Christ. About the same period, Marcion affords his evidence to the general reception of one of the Gospels, and consequently, as we have seen, proof of the reception of the other three.† On the Gospels, or, to include the case of the Marcionites and the Hebrew Christians, on a history of Christ, such as is found in one of the Gospels,

\* See pp. 204, 205.

† See before, p. 393.

every form of Christian faith rested as its foundation. No history presenting a different view of his ministry was in existence.

Here, then, we conclude our statement of the historical evidence, both direct and subsidiary, of the Genuineness of the Gospels. The catholic Christians bear testimony to their having been written by the particular individuals to whom they are ascribed. The Gnostics confirm this testimony by the proofs which they afford of their general reception and authority.

We have pursued this investigation carefully and at length, as if there was some intrinsic improbability in the proposition, that the Gospels were written by the authors to whom they are ascribed; some presumption against it, such as to require a patient removal of difficulties, and an accumulation of strong evidence, to establish its truth. But, on the contrary, it is apparent that the Gospels were written by early believers in our Lord; there is not a show of evidence that they were written by any other believers than those to whom they have been ascribed; and nothing is more probable, than that some of his immediate disciples, or of their intimate companions, should have left us such narratives of his life.

The Founder of our religion, whether one believe or not that he was authorized by God to speak in his name, was unquestionably the most wonderful individual who ever appeared on earth. A Jew, a Galilæan, in humble life, poor, without literary culture, without worldly power or influence; teaching but for a short time (probably not more than two years); wandering about the shores of the Lake of Galilee and of the Jordan; scarcely entering Jerusalem but to be driven away by persecution, till at last he went thither to perish under it; collecting during his lifetime only a small body of illiterate and often wavering followers; addressing men

whose incapacity, prejudices, or hatred continually led them to mistake or to pervert his meaning; surrounded, and apparently overpowered, by his unbelieving countrymen, who regarded him as a blasphemer, and caused him to suffer the death of the most unpitied of malefactors, — this person has wrought an effect, to which there is nothing parallel, on the opinions and on the condition of the most enlightened portion of our race. The moral civilization of the world, the noblest conceptions which men have entertained of religion, of their nature, and of their duties, are to be traced back directly to him. They come to us, not from the groves of the Academy, not from the walks by the Ilissus which Aristotle frequented, nor from the Painted Portico of Athens where Zeno taught: but from the mountain on which Jesus delivered his first recorded discourse; from the synagogue and the streets of the small town of Capernaum, of which not a ruin remains to fix its site; from fishing-boats on the Lake of Galilee; from the less inhabited tracts — the deserts, as they have been called — of Palestine; from the courts of the Jewish temple, where he who spoke was confronting men plotting his destruction; from the cross of one expiring in agony amid the savage triumph of his enemies. After witnessing such a death, his disciples lost all their doubts. They affirmed their Master to be the Saviour of the world, the Son of God. They devoted themselves to labor and suffer, and, if need were, to die, in making him known to men. What they strove to impress upon the minds of others was what, as they asserted, he had done and taught. They “knew nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.” It was the history, real or pretended, of his ministry on earth, which was the basis of all their teaching; the essential instruction to be first communicated to all who were summoned to put their trust in him, to take up their cross, and follow him in the new path which he had opened from earth to heaven. Now, there can be no supposition more irrational, than that the history of

Christ, which was thus promulgated by all his first disciples, and received by all their first converts, was lost before the beginning of the second century, and another history substituted in its place. But, if the Gospels contain the history of Christ as it was promulgated by his apostles, there can be no ground for doubting that they were written by the authors to whom they are ascribed, — by apostles, and companions of apostles.

To all the weight of evidence that the Gospels were written by the authors to whom they have been ascribed, what other account of their origin has been or may be opposed? The genuineness of the Gospel of John has been directly impugned by some modern German theologians. Their hypotheses are, necessarily, only developments of one essential proposition, that this Gospel is a spurious work, fraudulently ascribed to the apostle by its original writer, or by some other individual or individuals. There can be no direct evidence of the truth of this supposition; and with it another must be connected, namely, that this imagined fraud was so successful as to impose on all Christians, catholic and heretical, from the beginning of the second century. But, if this be a moral impossibility, then there is a moral certainty that the Gospel ascribed to John was the work of that apostle. Yet this brief statement, decisive as it may be, gives but a very imperfect view of those facts and considerations, heretofore presented, which show that any other supposition is altogether incredible.

In respect to the other three Gospels, the attacks on their genuineness and authenticity by many of the modern German theologians have been more elaborate. But, if their genuineness be denied, there are only two fundamental suppositions, one or the other of which must be made. One is of the same nature with that which has been advanced concerning St. John's Gospel. It may be asserted that each of them is a

spurious work of some *one* unknown author. But this supposition has been generally felt to be too indefensible. Recourse has therefore been had to different hypotheses, which may all be resolved into one fundamental supposition, — that the first three Gospels are, respectively, aggregates of stories by different hands, brought together by different compilers. In the First Part of this work, we have examined this supposition under as plausible a form as any in which it has appeared; and, if the view there taken of the subject be correct, there is something like mathematical demonstration of its falsity. But so far as those hypotheses are connected, as they have been, with the supposition that the narratives contained in the first three Gospels are distorted and discolored by tradition, there is a moral demonstration of their falsity. The character of Jesus Christ as exhibited in any one of the first three Gospels, or in all of them taken together, is equally consistent and wonderful. It is, at the same time, a character to which nothing in human history, before or after, presents a parallel or a resemblance. He appears as one acting under the miraculous conviction, that he was the instrument of God, to assure men, on His authority, of their relations to Him and to eternity; and this conception of his character is fully sustained. In the midst of men who appear, as we should expect the Jews of that age to appear, ignorant, narrow-minded, dull in their perceptions, indocile, many of them hating him with all the hatred of bigotry; throughout trials of every sort; under external circumstances so humiliating that we shrink from the thought of them, — he shows always the same unalterable elevation of character, requiring no human support. We feel that he was not to be degraded by any insult; and that no praise could have been addressed to him, had it come from the highest of men, which would not have been a strange impertinence. If our natural feelings have been unperverted, we follow him, if not with the conviction, — that conviction has been resisted, — but certainly

with a sentiment, continually prompting us to say, "Truly this was the Son of God." But it is folly to suppose, that such a portraiture of character could have been the result of an aggregation of fabulous traditionary stories which had been moulded by different minds, Jewish or Gentile. The comparison is unworthy of the subject; but it would not be more absurd to imagine, that the finest works of ancient plastic art, the display of perfect physical beauty in the Apollo Belvidere, had been produced by putting together the labors of different artists at different times, all working without a model, — this making one part or member, and that another.

We may enter on the inquiry respecting the genuineness of the Gospels merely as scholars and critics, without any previous opinion respecting their contents. To a thinking man, whatever may be his opinion, it must appear an object of great curiosity to determine the authorship of books so extraordinary, and which have had such vast influence. In treating the historical evidence for their genuineness, we deal with historical facts, and our reasoning is of a kind with which we are familiar, and which is fully within the cognizance of our judgment. But if, from the preceding examination of this evidence, it appears that the Gospels are the works of those to whom they have been ascribed, then the argument we have pursued, and which we ought to pursue, merely as scholars and critics, or, I may better say, as intelligent men, capable of understanding the force of reasoning, leads to results of the deepest moment. Upon arriving at the end of our journey, on quitting the detail of history and criticism, through which it has lain, considerations of another class present themselves to view: we see rising before us objects the most solemn and sublime; we have been brought to the contemplation of all that is of permanent and essential interest to man. Let us examine the reasoning thoroughly as

logicians; but, if it will bear this examination, then the conclusion to which it leads is to be regarded with very different feelings from what may have been called forth during its process. If the Gospels were written by the authors to whom they are ascribed, two of them by individuals who were intimate companions of Jesus, eye-witnesses of his ministry, who knew the facts, whatever they were, of his public life, and the other two by those who received their accounts immediately from such eye-witnesses, then the narrative of his ministry contained in the Gospels is true. The apostles could not have been deceived respecting the facts which they profess to relate. If Jesus Christ did not, by a series of miracles performed before crowds of spectators, by his doctrines, and by an exhibition of character altogether conformed to his claims, give full evidence of his being authorized to speak in the name of God, then the Gospels are not a collection of legends, the growth of tradition in an ignorant and marvel-loving age,—that supposition is excluded by the proof of their genuineness: they are throughout a tissue of monstrous and inexplicable falsehoods. If the Gospels be genuine, there but two conclusions which are possible. The narrative of the public life of Jesus contained in them is either essentially false, or it is essentially true; and, if false, it is so thoroughly false, that we know nothing concerning his character and actions. His immediate followers have buried his history under a mass of prodigious fictions; and these fictions they propagated, in the face of his enemies and their own, among those whom they affirmed to have witnessed the pretended events which they related. The true history of Jesus Christ, of him who really has wrought such vast changes in the condition of men, is unknown; and, instead of it, we have a fiction of inexpressible grandeur, the conception of some Jews of Galilee, fishermen, tax-gatherers, and others, who were shamelessly and recklessly destitute of veracity. — But we have brought the argu-

ment to an absurdity so repulsive, that it would be equally offensive and unprofitable to dwell on it longer.

It follows, then, that the history of Jesus contained in the Gospels is true. The essential facts of religion have been expressly made known to men on the authority of God. They are facts, glorious, solemn, overwhelming, but as real as the ordinary objects of every-day life, certain as nothing future in life can be. In our day, the belief of these facts is openly rejected; the evidence of them is continually assailed, directly and indirectly; baseless and thoroughly irreligious speculations are confidently put forth and widely received as substitutes for Christian faith, of which, as in mockery, they assume the name; and there are many who acquiesce in a general notion that religion may be true, and who regard this notion as a source of consolation and hope, without any such settled conviction of its truth as may essentially affect their characters. But if there be a God in whose infinite goodness we and all things are embosomed; if there be a future life which spreads before us, and all whom we love, exhaustless scenes of attainable happiness; if that Infinite Being who so eludes the grasp of human thought, have really brought himself into direct communication with mankind; if the character of Jesus Christ be not an inexplicable riddle, but a wonderful reality,—these are truths of which a wise man may well desire fully to assure himself. And perhaps there is no way in which he may attain a stronger feeling of certainty, than when he approaches them, as we have done, through reasoning conversant about ordinary subjects of thought, requiring no exercise of judgment beyond the common capacity of every intelligent man, not taking us into the dim light of metaphysical inquiry, involving the use of no uncertain language, and calling forth no doubts from that region which lies on every side beyond the bounds of our knowledge and our powers. The way which we have travelled is such, that it may by contrast heighten the effect



of the prospect on which it opens. It is somewhat as if, by an easy ascent, we found ourselves standing on a vast height, with the unbounded ocean spreading out before us.

But, however convinced we may be of the genuineness of the Gospels, one distinct and very important branch of the evidence of that fact has not yet been treated. It is the evidence founded on the intrinsic character of the Gospels themselves,—evidence in which the proofs of their genuineness and their truth are essentially blended together. The main proposition to be established by it is, that the Gospels are of such a character, that they could have been written only by individuals of such a character, and so circumstanced, as those to whom they are ascribed.



ADDITIONAL NOTES.

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# ADDITIONAL NOTES.

## NOTE A.

(See pp. 15, 16, 18.)

### FURTHER REMARKS ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE TEXT OF THE GOSPELS.

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## SECTION I.

### *On the Character and Importance of the Various Readings of the New Testament.*

WHEN attention was first strongly directed to the number of various readings upon *the Received Text* of the New Testament, and the critical edition of Mill was published, which was said to contain thirty thousand,\* two classes of individuals were very differently affected. Some sincerely religious men, among whom was Whitby, who wrote expressly against the labors of Mill, were apprehensive that the whole text of the New Testament, the foundation of our faith, would be unsettled; while the infidels of the age, among whom Collins was prominent, were ready, with other feelings, to adopt the same opinion. The whole number of various readings of the text of the New Testament that have hitherto been noted exceeds a hundred thousand, and may perhaps amount to a hundred and fifty thousand.

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\* That is to say, thirty thousand variations from the Received Text. But, when the Received Text varies from other authorities, its reading should also be considered as various readings of the text of the New Testament. Including these, therefore, Mill's edition presents about sixty thousand various readings.

But this number is, I presume, less in proportion than that of the various readings extant upon most classic authors, when compared with the quantity of text examined, and the number of manuscripts and other authorities collated in each particular case.\*

\* Bentley, in his "Remarks on Free-thinking," in answer to Collins, says:—

"Terence is now in one of the best conditions of any of the classic writers. The oldest and best copy of him is now in the Vatican Library, which comes nearest to the poet's own hand; but even that has hundreds of errors, most of which may be mended out of other exemplars, that are otherwise more recent and of inferior value. I myself have collated several, and do affirm that I have seen twenty thousand various lections in that little author, not near so big as the whole New Testament; and am morally sure, that, if half the number of manuscripts were collated for Terence with that niceness and minuteness which has been used in twice as many for the New Testament, the number of the variations would amount to above fifty thousand.

"In the manuscripts of the New Testament, the variations have been noted with a religious, not to say superstitious, exactness. Every difference in spelling, in the smallest particle or article of speech, in the very order or collocation of words, without real change, has been studiously registered. Nor has the text only been ransacked, but all the ancient versions, — the Latin Vulgate, Italic, Syriac, Æthiopic, Arabic, Coptic, Armenian, Gothic, and Saxon; nor these only, but all the dispersed citations of the Greek and Latin fathers in a course of five hundred years. What wonder, then, if, with all this scrupulous search in every hole and corner, the varieties rise to thirty thousand; when, in all ancient books of the same bulk, whereof the manuscripts are numerous, the variations are as many, or more, and yet no versions to swell the reckoning?

"The editors of profane authors do not use to trouble their readers, or risk their own reputation, by an useless list of every small slip committed by a lazy or ignorant scribe. What is thought commendable in an edition of Scripture, and has the name of fairness and fidelity, would in them be deemed impertinence and trifling. Hence the reader not versed in ancient manuscripts is deceived into an opinion, that there were no more variations in the copies than what the editor has communicated. Whereas, if the like scrupulousness was observed in registering the smallest changes in profane authors, as is allowed, nay required, in sacred, the now formidable number of thirty thousand would appear a very trifle.

"It is manifest that books in verse are not near so obnoxious to variations as those in prose; the transcriber, if he is not wholly ignorant and stupid, being guided by the measures, and hindered from such alterations as do not fall in with the laws of numbers. And yet, even in poets, the varia-

How such an amount of various readings exists upon the text of ancient works, we may understand, when we consider, what every one who has had experience on the subject is aware of, that no written copy of an exemplar of any considerable length, if made only with ordinary care, is without variations and errors. Notwithstanding the extreme care which has in some cases been taken, it is doubtful whether even a printed book exists which corresponds throughout to its proposed archetype, or which, in other words, is wholly free from *errata*. There is no hazard in saying, that the variations in the printed copies of King James's version of the Bible, such variations as are noted in the manuscripts of the New Testament, are to be reckoned by thousands, and if, as in the case of the Greek text of the New Testament, we were to take the quotations of different writers into account, by tens of thousands. But, in producing copies by transcription, the number of errors resulting will be vastly greater than in producing the

tions are so very many as can hardly be conceived without use and experience. In the late edition of Tibullus, by the learned Mr. Broukhuise, you have a register of various lections in the close of that book, where you may see at the first view that they are as many as the lines. The same is visible in Plautus set out by Pareus. I myself, during my travels, have had the opportunity to examine several manuscripts of the poet Manilius; and can assure you that the variations I have met with are twice as many as all the lines of the book " (pp. 93-95, 8th ed )

To take a few books immediately at hand, I perceive, by a loose computation from a table at the end of Wakefield's Lucretius, that he has collected about twelve thousand various readings of that author (exclusive of more differences of orthography), from five printed copies only. Weiske's edition of Longinus presents more than three thousand various readings of the "Treatise on the Sublime," a work of about the length of the Gospel of Mark, collected from eight manuscripts and two early editions. And Bekker has published *variations from his text* of the writings contained in his edition of Plato, which fill seven hundred and seventy-eight crowded octavo pages, and amount to I know not how many more than sixty thousand; the manuscripts used on each of the different writings being on an average about thirteen. The various readings of the New Testament, it is to be remembered, have been collected from a very great number of manuscripts of the original, — manuscripts of numerous ancient versions, in which it is not to be supposed that the translator always rendered in a manner scrupulously literal, and also from the citations of a long series of fathers, who, we know, were not commonly attentive to verbal accuracy in quoting.

same number of copies by the press; since far more liability to error will exist in the case of every particular copy transcribed, than exists in regard to a whole edition of printed copies. With these general views, it is not necessary to dwell on the particular causes of mistakes and errors in ancient manuscripts, which are more numerous than may at first thought be supposed. They have been often pointed out by different writers.

I proceed, then, to observe, that, of the various readings of the New Testament, nineteen out of twenty, at least, are to be dismissed at once from consideration; not on account of their intrinsic unimportance, — that is a separate consideration, — but because they are found in so few authorities, and their origin is so easily explained, that no critic would regard them as having any claim to be inserted in the text. Of those which remain, a very great majority are entirely unimportant. They consist in different modes of spelling; in different tenses of the same verb, or different cases of the same noun, not affecting the essential meaning; in the use of the singular for the plural, or the plural for the singular, where one or the other expression is equally suitable; in the insertion or omission of particles, such as *ὅτι* and *δέ*, not affecting the sense, or of the article in cases equally unimportant; in the introduction of a proper name, where, if not inserted, the personal pronoun is to be understood, or of some other word or words expressive of a sense which would be distinctly implied without them; in the addition of “Jesus” to “Christ,” or “Christ” to “Jesus;” in the substitution of one synonymous or equivalent term for another; in the transposition of words, leaving their signification the same; in the use of an uncompounded verb, or of the same verb compounded with a preposition, the latter differing from the former, if at all, only in a shade of meaning; and in a few short passages, liable to the suspicion of having been copied into the Gospel where we find them from some other evangelist. Such various readings, and others equally unimportant, compose far the greater part of all, concerning which there may be, or has been, a question whether they are to be admitted into the text or not; and it is therefore of no consequence in which way the question has been, or may be, determined.

But after deducting from the whole amount of various readings, first those of no authority, and next those of no importance, a



number will remain which are objects of a certain degree of curiosity and interest. To three of them an extravagant importance has been attached, from their supposed bearing upon the theological doctrine of the Trinity. But the principal of these, the famous passage in the first Epistle of John (chap. v. 7), is a manifest interpolation. In the case of this and of most other passages, where the true reading is a matter of any interest, we may commonly arrive at a satisfactory judgment concerning it; and, in regard to the cases in which we cannot, it is clear, that no opinion, nor any inference whatever, respecting the meaning of the writer, is to be founded on an *uncertain* reading.

The Received Text, as it has been called, of the New Testament — that is, the text which for almost two centuries, till after the time of Griesbach, was found with little variation in the common editions of the New Testament — was formed during the sixteenth century, with comparatively few helps, and in the exercise of no great critical judgment. But the chief value of the immense amount of labor which has since been expended upon the text of the New Testament does not consist in its having effected improvements in the Received Text. Its chief and great value consists in establishing the fact, that the text of the New Testament has been transmitted to us with remarkable integrity; that far the greater part of the variations among different copies are of no authority or of no importance; and that it is a matter scarcely worth consideration, as regards the study of our religion and its history, whether, after making a very few corrections, we take the Received Text formed as it was, or the very best which the most laborious and judicious criticism might produce.

In his edition of the New Testament, Griesbach presents the Received Text in constant comparison with his own. He notes conspicuously, as preferable, or probable, or deserving attention, all those variations from it which he so regards, when he does not admit them into his text. The comparison between all the readings, which have in his view any grade of probability, is thus rendered a mere matter of ocular inspection. As a fair specimen of the whole, I will give all those which he thus presents on the first eight chapters of Matthew. When it may be done, I will express the change in English; but, in some cases, the variation is so trifling as to admit of no corresponding variation in a transla-

tion. The first column of the following table contains the readings of the Received Text; the second, the variations from it. Those unaccompanied with any note (except here and there a remark of my own) are what Griesbach has admitted into his text. In other cases, I have noted with sufficient distinctness the degree of probability that he assigns to them.\*

RECEIVED TEXT.	VARIATIONS ADOPTED OR SUGGESTED BY GRIESBACH.
Chap. i. 1. $\Delta\alpha\delta\iota\delta$ 6. $\Sigma\omicron\lambda\omicron\mu\omega\nu\tau\alpha$ 18. <i>Jesus</i> $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\nu\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ( <i>generation</i> ) 19. $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\delta\epsilon\gamma\mu\alpha\tau\acute{\iota}\sigma\alpha\iota$ ( <i>to</i> <i>expose to shame</i> ) 22. $\tau\omicron\upsilon$	$\Delta\alpha\upsilon\iota\delta$ } The names of David $\Sigma\omicron\lambda\omicron\mu\omega\nu\alpha$ } and Solomon differ- } ently spelt. perhaps to be omitted. $\gamma\epsilon\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ( <i>birth</i> ) perhaps, $\delta\epsilon\gamma\mu\alpha\tau\acute{\iota}\sigma\alpha\iota$ ( <i>to expose</i> ) perhaps to be omitted. $\gamma\epsilon\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ( <i>birth</i> )
Chap. ii. 8. <i>carefully search out</i> 9. $\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\eta$ 11. <i>they found</i> 15. $\tau\omicron\upsilon$ 17. $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\delta$ 18. <i>lamentation and</i> 22. $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota$	perhaps, <i>search out carefully</i> perhaps, $\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\acute{\upsilon}\theta\eta$ (no change in the sense.) <i>they saw</i> perhaps to be omitted. perhaps, $\delta\iota\alpha$ probably to be omitted. perhaps to be omitted. perhaps to be omitted.
Chap. iii. 1. $\delta\grave{\epsilon}$ 8. $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\delta$ 8. <i>fruits worthy</i> 10. $\kappa\alpha\iota$ 11. <i>with fire</i>	perhaps to be omitted. perhaps, $\delta\iota\alpha$ <i>fruit worthy</i> perhaps to be omitted. perhaps to be omitted. (If so, it was borrowed from Luke iii. 16, where there is no doubt of its genuineness.)
12. <i>his wheat</i>	perhaps, <i>the wheat</i>
Chap. iv. 4. <i>a man</i> $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota$ ( <i>upon</i> )	perhaps, <i>man</i> ( $\delta$ being added be- fore $\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$ .) probably, $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ ( <i>by</i> )

\* I have used both Griesbach's last critical edition and his manual edition; but of course have not quoted those readings of the latter which he notices only as on some account remarkable, and which are not such as he admits between the lines below the text of his critical edition.

5. *sets* ("sets him on the pinnacle of the temple") perhaps, *set*
10. *Go from me, Satan* *Go behind me, Satan* (the words *ὀπίσω μου* being added by Griesbach.)
12. *Jesus* probably to be omitted.
13. *Καπερναούμ* probably, *Καφαρναούμ* (a different spelling of the name of the city, Capernaum.)
18. *Jesus* omitted.
- Chap. v. 9. *αὐτοί* perhaps to be omitted. (No change can be made in a translation.)
11. *ψευδόμενοι* (*speaking falsely*) perhaps to be omitted.
20. *ἡ δικαιοσύνη ὑμῶν* perhaps, *ὑμῶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη*
25. *whilst thou art in the way with him* perhaps, *whilst thou art with him in the way*
27. *to them of old time* omitted.
28. *αὐτῆς* probably, *αὐτῇ*
31. *οὗ* perhaps to be omitted.
32. *whoever shall put away* perhaps, *every one putting away*
44. *bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you* probably to be omitted. (If so, it was borrowed from Luke.)
- In the last clause, if it be retained, for *τοὺς μισούντας* *τοὺς μισοῦσιν* perhaps to be omitted. (If so, it was borrowed from Luke.)
- despitefully use you (rather, harass you) and*
47. *brethren publicans do thus* perhaps, *friends gentiles*
48. *ὥστε* perhaps, *ὥς*
- your Father in heaven* probably, *your heavenly Father*
- Chap. vi. 1. *αἶμα* *righteousness* (The propriety of this change is doubtful.)
4. *αὐτὸς* ("he will reward you") perhaps to be omitted. (So as to read "will reward you," only.)
- openly* probably to be omitted.
5. *when thou prayest, thou shalt not be* perhaps, *when ye pray, ye shall not be*

- ἐν  
 that ("that they have  
 their reward")  
 6. τῷ ("pray to thy Fa-  
 ther who is in se-  
 cret")  
 openly  
 13. *For thine is the king-  
 dom and the power  
 and the glory for  
 ever. Amen.*  
 15. *their offences*  
 16. *that* ("that they have  
 their reward")  
 18. κρυπτῷ (twice)  
 openly  
 21. *your treasure*  
*your heart*  
 24. μαμωνᾷ  
 25. *and what ye may drink*  
 34. τὰ (in the Common  
 Version rendered  
 "the things of")  
 Chap. vii. 2. ἀντιμετρηθήσεται (it  
 shall be measured  
 in return)  
 9. ἔστιν  
 12. οὗτος (this)  
 14. Ὅτι ("Because strait  
 is the gate")  
 Chap. viii. 2. ἐλθὼν (coming)  
 3. *Jesus*  
 4. Μωσῆς  
 5. τῷ Ἰησοῦ ("as *Jesus*  
 was entering")  
 8. λόγον  
 13. ἑκατοντάρχῳ
- probably to be omitted.  
*that*, probably to be omitted.  
 perhaps to be omitted. (So as to  
 read "pray to thy Father in  
 secret.")  
 probably to be omitted.  
 omitted. (When our Lord's pray-  
 er was used in the liturgies of  
 the ancient Church, this doxol-  
 ogy was subjoined; and tran-  
 scribers, being accustomed to it  
 in this connection, introduced  
 it into their copies.)  
 probably to be omitted.  
*that*, probably to be omitted.  
 perhaps κρυφαίῳ (an improbable  
 suggestion.)  
 omitted.  
 perhaps, *thy* treasure.  
 perhaps, *thy* heart.  
 μαμωνᾷ  
 probably to be omitted. (If so, it  
 was borrowed from Luke.)  
 probably to be omitted.  
 μετρηθήσεται (it shall be measured)  
 perhaps to be omitted.  
 perhaps, οὕτως (thus)  
 Τί ("How straight is the gate")  
 perhaps, προσελθὼν (coming up,  
 namely, to him.)  
 perhaps to be omitted.  
 perhaps Μωϋσῆς  
 αὐτῷ ("as *he* was entering")  
 λόγῳ  
 ἑκατοντάρχη

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 15. <i>avroĩs</i> ("waited upon them") | perhaps, <i>avtō</i> ("waited upon him")         |
| 25. <i>avrov</i> ("his disciples")     | omitted ("the disciples")                        |
| 28. <i>Gergesenes</i>                  | probably, <i>Gerasenes</i> ; perhaps, <i>Ga-</i> |
| 29. <i>Jesus</i>                       | omitted. [darenes.                               |
| 31. <i>suffer us to go</i>             | <i>send us</i>                                   |
| 32. <i>the herd of swine</i>           | <i>the swine</i>                                 |
| "the herd of swine"                    | <i>of swine</i> , omitted.                       |

Such are the various readings which have been represented by other critics beside Griesbach as rendering one text different from another in its whole conformation and entire coloring.

Of the passages of more importance in the Gospels, concerning which there is reason to think that they did not proceed from the evangelists, I shall speak in a following section. Those, however, in the Gospel of Matthew are not various readings, nor is there any reasonable doubt that they always made a part of our present Greek Gospel. Whether they likewise were to be found in the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, as it came from the pen of the evangelist, is another question. But, before proceeding to its examination, we will attend to the questions respecting the original language of Matthew's Gospel, and its use by the Hebrew Christians.

## SECTION II.

### *On the Original Language of Matthew's Gospel, and its Use by the Hebrew Christians.*

We believe that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, meaning by that term the common language of the Jews of his time, because such is the uniform statement of all ancient writers who advert to the subject. To pass over others whose authority is of less weight, he is affirmed to have written in Hebrew by Papias,\* Irenæus,† Origen,‡ Eusebius, § and Jerome;|| nor does any ancient author

\* See before, p. 139. † See before, p. 72. ‡ See before, p. 82.

§ Hist. Eccles., lib. iii. c. 24. Questiones ad Marinum, ap. Maii Scriptorum Veterum Nov. Collect., tom. i. p. 64.

|| The fact is stated or implied by Jerome in passages so numerous, that it is not worth while to refer to them particularly.

advance a contrary opinion. This testimony is of the more weight, because, if there had been any prejudice on the subject, it would have operated against the common belief, as the prejudices of modern Christians have done. It would have led the great body of ancient Gentile Christians, from whom we receive the account, to prefer considering their Greek Gospel of Matthew as the original, not as a translation.

If we will not, then, reject the testimony of all Christian antiquity to a simple fact, in which there is no intrinsic improbability, we must believe that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew. Nothing has been objected to that testimony which I can regard as of sufficient force to justify a protracted discussion. On the contrary, it is confirmed by the corresponding evidence of the fathers, that the Hebrew original of Matthew was in common use (either in a pure or a corrupt form) among Jewish Christians.

One of the last notices of the Jewish Christians in the New Testament is in the words addressed by the other apostles to St. Paul, during his last visit to Jerusalem: "Thou seest, brother, what multitudes of Jews there are who believe; and *they are all zealous for the Law*. But they have heard concerning thee, that thou art teaching all the Jews living among the Gentiles to become apostates from Moses; telling them *not to circumcise their children, nor to observe the ancient customs*."\* The same attachment to their Law continued to distinguish the great body of Jewish Christians, though there were freethinkers among them, who, as Origen says, "relinquished the ancient customs under the pretext of expositions and allegories."† Even these, however, there is no reason to doubt, retained the rite of circumcision. And, on the other hand, the more bigoted among them contended that the literal observance of the Jewish Law was not only binding upon Jewish, but equally upon Gentile Christians. As a general distinction, the Jewish Christians believed Christ to have been only a man, in opposition to the doctrine of his divine nature, which, in some sense or other, began very early to be maintained by the Gentile fathers. Some of their number at the same time received, and others rejected, the belief of his miraculous conception. And,

\* Acts xxi 20, 21. † Origen. cont. Celsum, lib. ii. c. 8; Opp. i. 388.

besides the differences which have been mentioned, the separation between the Jewish and Gentile Christians was undoubtedly in a great degree produced and perpetuated by the feelings with which Jews and Gentiles had previously, for an indefinite time, regarded each other. In the second century, the Jewish Christians, generally, were considered as heretics, and denominated Ebionites.

It appears from the language in which Matthew wrote, and from the internal character of his Gospel, that he intended it particularly for Jewish Christians. Conformably to this, we have satisfactory evidence, that, as an heretical sect, they used it exclusively of the other three Gospels from the second century downwards.

Irenæus, speaking of the Jewish Christians under the name of Ebionites, repeatedly mentions briefly, as if it were a fact of common notoriety, that they used the Gospel of Matthew alone.\*

Symmachus, one of the ancient well-known Jewish translators of the Old Testament into Greek, was an Ebionite. He wrote commentaries in defence of the doctrine of his sect, which are mentioned by Eusebius (with whom his translator Rufinus is to be compared), Jerome, and others, who speak of his reference to, or use of, the Gospel of Matthew, without intimating his use of any other book. Jerome says, that his commentaries were written on the Gospel of Matthew.†

By the name of Ebionites, the Jewish Christians, generally, continued to be denominated till the time of Epiphanius in the fourth century. Epiphanius divides them into Ebionites and Nazarenes, being the first writer who uses the latter name as that of an heretical sect. His unsupported authority deserves no credit, when he

\* Cont. Hæres., lib. i. c. 26, § 2; lib. iii. c. 11, § 7.

† See Lardner, Works, 4to, i. 447. Eusebius (H.E., lib. vi. c. 17) says, as I suppose his words should be literally rendered, that Symmachus maintained his heresy, "strongly contending against the Gospel of Matthew;" from which may be inferred the peculiar authority of the Gospel of Matthew with the Ebionites. The meaning of Eusebius apparently was, that Symmachus contended strongly against the true sense of the Gospel of Matthew. Rufinus, rendering the passage, as I conceive, somewhat loosely, makes Eusebius say, that Symmachus "endeavored to maintain his heresy from the Gospel of Matthew."

relates what is improbable, or attacks the character of those whom he assails, or was under any temptation to falsehood. But there is no ground for distrusting the main truth of his assertions respecting the use which the Hebrew Christians made of the Gospel of Matthew. Of those whom he calls Nazarenes, he says, "They have the Gospel of Matthew very complete; for it is well known, that this is preserved among them, as it was first written, in Hebrew."\* Of those whom he calls Ebionites, he says that they used the Gospel of Matthew alone, in the original Hebrew, calling it *the Gospel according to the Hebrews*; and the truth is, he adds, that Matthew alone, of all the writers of the New Testament, composed in Hebrew.†.

About the end of the fourth century, Jerome states that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew; and that he had obtained leave to transcribe a copy of the Hebrew original from the Nazarenes of Beroëa in Syria, by whom it was used.‡ Afterwards, speaking of this same work under the name of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, he mentions that he had translated it both into Greek and Latin, and repeatedly observes that it was generally considered (*ut plerique autumant*) as the Gospel of Matthew.§

The original of Matthew's Gospel, being used by the Hebrew Christians, naturally obtained the name of "the Gospel according to the Hebrews." But copies of it were extant containing spurious additions and variations. The fathers, with rare exceptions, such as Origen and Jerome, from their ignorance of the Hebrew could have known but little of the contents of any copy except by report. Jerome particularizes certain additions, which he found in that used by him. But we have no assurance, that there were not other copies extant, even in his time, more conformed to the original text. No father, it may safely be presumed, had collated

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\* Opp. i. 124. Epiphanius's want of accuracy, however, appears in what he immediately subjoins: "But I do not know whether they take away the genealogy from Abraham to Christ;" from which words we may conclude, likewise, that he had not seen the book of which he speaks.

† Opp. i. 127.

‡ Catal. Vir. Illust. in Matth.; Opp. tom. iv. pars ii. col. 102.

§ Advers. Pelagianos, lib. iii.; Opp. tom. iv. pars ii. col. 533. Comment in Matth. xii. 13; Opp. tom. iv. pars i. col. 47.



different copies. But the spurious additions of which the fathers had heard, and which a very few of their number may have seen in some particular copy, and the omission in many copies of the first two chapters ascribed to Matthew (of which we shall hereafter speak), threw a suspicion on the work; and, under the name of the Gospel of the Hebrews, it came to be regarded as not a canonical book. Hence, in modern times, the opinion has been maintained that the Gospel of the Hebrews was originally a different work from the Gospel of Matthew. This opinion has been strengthened by a false account given by Epiphanius of the Gospel of the Hebrews, as he pretends that it existed among those whom he calls Ebionites.

But in regard to those interpolations and changes found in the Gospel of the Hebrews, of which we have any authentic information, there seems to be no difficulty in explaining their origin. The Ebionites, generally, were illiterate. Very few of them, it is likely, were acquainted with other books than those of the Old Testament and the Gospel of Matthew. Probably there were none among them who were transcribers by trade, and none, therefore, who had acquired those habits of accuracy and consideration, and that feeling of responsibility, which might be found in a regular transcriber. It was to be expected, therefore, that the Gospel of Matthew would suffer in their hands. It was, we may suppose, carelessly copied; the number of copies was small, and they were not compared together for the sake of correcting one by another; marginal additions, by a common mistake of transcribers, of which I have before spoken, and which I shall have repeated occasion to notice, were introduced into the text; and it would not be strange if there were transcribers who sometimes allowed themselves to insert a passage which they had derived from tradition, or from some other source, and which they regarded as true and to the purpose.

Putting aside the fabulous account of Epiphanius, there are no variations in the Gospel of the Hebrews from the Gospel of Matthew but such as may be thus explained. There is no appearance, that the Jewish Christians, or any portion of them, undertook to refashion the Gospel of Matthew. Nor are the interpolations or changes specified such as have the appearance of being made to favor their peculiar opinions.

In regard to the essential identity of the Gospel of the Hebrews with the Gospel of Matthew, it is to be observed, that all the interpolations and changes in the former, of which we have any credible account, bear but a very small proportion to the contents of the Gospel of Matthew. Yet it is probable that Jerome has noticed all or nearly all the remarkable variations existing in his copy of the Gospel of the Hebrews. It appears, therefore, that, throughout far the greater part of their contents, they coincided with each other. This must have been the fact, or it would not have been believed that they were originally the same book. Thus agreeing together in far the greater part of their contents, they were the same book. The variations found in copies of the Gospel of the Hebrews can be considered only as variations in particular copies of a common original. The supposition, therefore, is altogether groundless, that the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of the Hebrews were different works, by different authors.

Matthew wrote in the native language of the Jewish Christians. He wrote particularly for their use. There was nothing in his Gospel to offend their national prejudices. It is not to be believed, therefore, that they rejected his Gospel, and substituted an anonymous gospel in its stead.

It was, as we have seen, the common belief of the Gentile Christians, that the Jewish Christians used the original of Matthew's Gospel in a pure or a corrupted state. The Jewish Christians, consequently, affirmed that they used Matthew's Gospel; for otherwise such a belief could not have prevailed. But no probable reason can be given why one party should have affirmed this fact, or why the other party should have believed it, except its truth.

We conclude, then, that Matthew's Gospel was originally written in Hebrew; and that it was preserved in this language, in copies with a text more or less pure, by the Jewish Christians till about the fifth century, when the traces of their existence as a sect disappear from history.

## SECTION III.

*On some Passages in the Received Text of the Gospels, of which the Genuineness is doubtful.*

## I.

## THE FIRST TWO CHAPTERS OF THE PRESENT GREEK GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

The first passage to be examined consists of the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel. There is no doubt that they have always made a part of our Greek translation; but this does not decide the question, whether they proceeded from the apostle. As has been already suggested,\* they may have been an ancient document, written in Hebrew, originally a separate work, but which, on account of its small size and the connection of its subject, was transcribed into manuscripts of the Hebrew original of Matthew, till in time it became blended with his Gospel as a part of it, in some copies, one or more of which came into the hands of his translator.

The first point, then, to be attended to in this inquiry is, that a large portion of the Jewish Christians did not believe the miraculous conception of our Lord, and had not the account of it, that is, the two chapters in question, in their copies of Matthew's Gospel. There was nothing in their prejudices or habits of mind which could have led them to reject the belief of that fact, and especially to mutilate their Gospel in order to get rid of the account of it. But if this be so, as it is altogether improbable that the two chapters would be lost by accident from any number of copies, it follows that they were an addition to the original in the copies in which they were found, and not an omission in those in which they were wanting.

The chapters themselves are next to be examined, in order to determine whether the narrative contained in them is such as we can believe to have proceeded from the apostle; and, in doing so, we must compare it with the account of the nativity given by

\* See before, p. 16.

Luke, which, there is no plausible reason for doubting, always made a part of his Gospel. Respecting this account, however, a few preliminary remarks are necessary.

I agree with many critics in supposing, that it existed in a written form in Hebrew, previously to the composition of Luke's Gospel, in which he inserted a translation of it, perhaps his own, perhaps one already made. The language differs from that of the rest of his Gospel, as being more conformed to the Hebrew idiom; and the cast of the narrative has something of a poetical and even fabulous character, very different from the severe simplicity with which he, in common with the other evangelists, relates events in his own person. But his adopting this narrative proves that he regarded it as essentially true; and he would not have so regarded it, had not the *main fact* of the miraculous birth of Jesus been believed to be true by the apostles and other early Christians with whom he associated. Now, considering that two, and probably three, of the apostles\* were relatives of Jesus, and that others of their number, as John, were familiar with his mother and family, there can be little doubt that the belief of the apostles rested on information derived from them.

The account of Luke, then, being in its more important features conformable to the belief of the apostles, any other account inconsistent with this, or contradictory to it, cannot be received as proceeding from an apostle. Let us apply this test to the two chapters in question.

We are first struck with the discrepance between the two genealogies given; the one by the author of those chapters, and the other by Luke. I shall not enter into an examination of the various attempts that have been made to show that both may be true. They are all conjectural; and each is exposed to particular objections, of a nature to prevent its being received. If, for instance, according to a common notion, Luke had intended to give the genealogy of Mary, he would have said so. He would not have indicated his meaning so ambiguously and circuitously as by affirming that Joseph was the son of Heli, when he meant only that he was his son-in-law, Heli being Mary's father. But there is a general

\* James the son of Alpheus and his brother Jude, and probably Simon the Canaanite.

remark which applies to them all. If Matthew were the author of the two chapters, the genealogy given by him was regarded as correct by the other apostles. So also we may infer, with equal confidence, that the genealogy given by Luke was regarded by them as correct. It follows, then, that the apostles were acquainted with two genealogies, both correct, but at first view irreconcilable with each other, and the apparent contradiction of which has been regarded since the second century as presenting a serious difficulty. In giving either of the two, an apostle or evangelist, aware that it might be confronted by another, entitled to equal credit, would, we may reasonably believe, have had regard to this fact, and inserted a few words of explanation. The supposition, it may be added, is very unlikely, that, according to the usages of the Jews, there should have been two modes of reckoning the descent of the same individual, both equally proper. We know nothing to countenance such an opinion.

If, then, the genealogy contained in the two chapters be irreconcilable with that of Luke, it cannot have proceeded from Matthew. The most probable conjecture, perhaps, is, that we owe it, in common with the remainder of the two chapters, to some Hebrew convert, who composed the narrative shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews, and who, having found a genealogy of some individual by the name of Joseph, represented as a descendant of David, mistook it for the genealogy of Joseph the husband of Mary.

As we proceed, the discrepancy between the account of the nativity of Jesus, as contained in the two chapters, and the account of Luke, continues to be very striking.

According to Luke, Joseph and Mary dwelt in Nazareth. On the occasion of a proposed census, they both journeyed to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, and where he was visited by shepherds, to whom his birth had been announced by angels. Forty days after his birth,—that is, when the days of Mary's purification, according to the Jewish Law, had been accomplished,—he was presented in the temple, when his high destiny was publicly announced. Then, after performing all the rites of the Law, Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth.

The author of the two chapters, without mentioning any previous residence of Joseph and Mary at Nazareth, relates, that

Jesus was born at Bethlehem; that certain Magi from the East, having seen his star, came to pay him reverence; that their inquiries at Jerusalem concerning the new-born king of the Jews threw Herod and the whole city into commotion; that they were directed by Herod to inform him when they had found the child, but were divinely warned not to do so; and that Joseph was at the same time warned that the child's life was in danger, and directed to fly with him and his mother into Egypt, which he accordingly did, and remained there till after the death of Herod. In the account of Joseph's return, the writer shows that he supposed Bethlehem to have been his previous place of residence; for he represents him as prevented only by a new divine warning from returning to that city, and as led in consequence to take up his abode at Nazareth.

As it may be a matter of curiosity to those not familiar with the subject, I will mention the manner in which it has been attempted to reconcile these two accounts. Luke says (ii. 39), that after the purification of Mary in the temple, "when they [Joseph and Mary] had performed all things according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town, Nazareth." But it is contended, that, though Luke has so expressed himself, yet the return to Nazareth actually meant by him was that following the flight into Egypt; that Joseph and Mary did not go from Jerusalem to Nazareth, but for some reason or other went to reside at Bethlehem; that, during this residence at Bethlehem, the visit of the Magi took place; and, consequently, that it was after the miraculous display of angels at the birth of Jesus, and after the predictions which accompanied his public presentation in the temple, that Jerusalem was first thrown into commotion, and the jealousy of Herod excited, by the reports and inquiries of those strangers.

This, then, is the second very improbable solution of an apparent contradiction between the account in the two chapters and the account of Luke; and it is to be observed, that the improbability of the truth of any narrative increases in a very rapid ratio to the number of such solutions required.

We must consider, that, if the account of Luke respecting the birth of Jesus be authentic in its essential features, it must have been derived from the mother and family of Jesus, as its *original* source; for they only could furnish an authentic account. But

the circumstances related in the two chapters are of such a character, that they could not have been forgotten or omitted in their narrative, had they taken place; nor can we refer to the same authentic source two narratives apparently so contradictory, which coincide in scarcely a single circumstance, and which, in their general complexion, present an aspect so different. The account of Luke being that received by the apostles, we cannot believe another so unlike it to have proceeded from the Apostle Matthew.

To the narrative in the two chapters, there are other objections, arising from its intrinsic character. In the story of the Magi we find represented a strange mixture of astrology and miracle. A divine interposition is pretended, which was addressed to the false opinions of certain Magi, respecting the significance of the stars, and for which no purpose worthy of the Deity can be assigned. They are represented as having been guided by a star, which at last stood over the place where the child was; though an object but a little elevated in the heavens changes its apparent position in reference to objects seen on the earth, according to the point of view of the spectator. Distrusting, however, the guidance of the star, which had led them as far as Jerusalem, and which finally, as we are told, guided them right, they are represented as inquiring in that city where the object of their search was to be found; and, in making this inquiry, we find them using language — *Where is the new-born king of the Jews?* — that must have been altogether unintelligible to those not equally favored with themselves by a divine communication respecting his birth. These inquiries, according to the account, excited great alarm in Herod, who was fast approaching the grave, worn out with insane passions, disease, and old age; and whose want of faith in the Jewish religion, and natural temperament, would have led him to regard with derision the Jewish expectations of a Messiah. He could not have apprehended, that the remainder of his life would be disturbed by the future claims to his throne of an infant just born in obscurity; and his solicitude about what might happen, years after his death, to those of his children whom he had not destroyed, was little likely to disturb him. Yet he is represented as having been so carried away by fear and passion, as to act, not only with the greatest barbarity, but the greatest folly, — to have

ordered an indiscriminate massacre, from which his intended victim actually escaped; when it is clear, that if the preceding circumstances related by Luke, or even those related by the author of the two chapters, be true, that victim had become far too conspicuous not to be very easily identified.

But, if we reject the two chapters, a difficulty arises; as the original Hebrew Gospel could not have commenced with the first words of the third chapter, — “But in those days.” The difficulty, however, is removed by considering, that these words may have been added as a form of transition to a new subject, when the two chapters were blended with the Gospel, and that the Gospel may originally have begun with the words that follow, — “John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judæa;” that is, in a manner corresponding to the commencement of Mark’s Gospel. Or the first words may originally have been, “In the days of Herod,” meaning Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, which supposition is, perhaps, countenanced by the story of Epiphanius, before mentioned, that the Gospel of the Ebionites began, “In the days of Herod, *king of Judæa* ;” the addition of which last words, *king of Judæa*, seems to have been a blunder of his own.

But the commencement of the third chapter, “In those days,” presents a more serious difficulty upon the supposition that what precedes was written by Matthew. The last events mentioned at the close of the second chapter are the accession of Archelaus as ruler of Judæa, and Joseph’s going to reside at Nazareth. But it was not in the time of those events, it was not “in those days,” — on the contrary, it was about thirty years afterward, — that John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness of Judæa.

The reasons that have been given may, I think, satisfy us that the two chapters in question did not proceed from the Apostle Matthew. When we turn to the narrative of Luke, no important difficulties will, I think, present themselves to the mind of one who has not determined to reject the belief of all miraculous interposition. The narrative is, as I have said, in a style rather poetical than historical. It was probably not committed to writing till after the death of Mary, and of all the other individuals particularly concerned. With its real miracles the fictions of oral tradition had probably become blended; and the individual by whom it was committed to writing probably added what he regarded as



poetical embellishments. It is not necessary to believe, for example, that Mary and Zachariah actually expressed themselves in the rhythmical language of the hymns ascribed to them; or to receive as literal history the whole account respecting the birth of John the Baptist, or of the different appearances of an angel announcing himself as Gabriel. With our present means of judging, however, we cannot draw a precise line between the truth, and what has been added to the truth. But in regard to the main event related, the miraculous conception of Jesus, it seems to me not difficult to discern in it purposes worthy of God. Nothing could have served more effectually to relieve him from that interposition and embarrassment in the performance of his high mission, to which he would have been exposed on the part of his parents, if born in the common course of nature. It took him from the control of Mary and Joseph, and made them feel, that, in regard to him, they were not to interfere with the purposes of God. It gave him an abiding sense, from his earliest years, that his destiny on earth was peculiar and marvellous; and must have operated most powerfully to produce that consciousness of his intimate and singular connection with God, which was so necessary to the formation of the character he displayed, and to the right performance of the great trust committed to him. It corresponds with his office; presenting him, to the mind of a believer, as an individual set apart from all other men, coming into the world with the stamp of God upon him, answerably to his purpose here, which was to speak to us with authority from God.

## II.

### MATTHEW, CHAP. XXVII 3-10.

In reference to the original text of our present Greek translation of Matthew, I know of nothing extant in any considerable number of copies, which can be considered as an interpolation of any importance. The most remarkable, perhaps, is the doxology at the end of our Lord's prayer, already noticed.\* But, beside the two chapters that have been discussed, there are other passages which are liable to the suspicion of having been interpolated

\* See before, p. 424.

in the copy, or in copies, of the original Hebrew, used by the translator.

It is to be remarked, that, for determining the text of Matthew's Hebrew Gospel, we have but a single authority, the Greek translation, the representative perhaps of but one manuscript, probably not of many. But, where we have but a single manuscript for determining the text of an author, — and our single authority, the Greek translation, amounts to but little more, — its evidence is not of great weight against a strong presumption of the spuriousness of a passage.

Of the passages referred to, the genuineness of which is suspicious, one is the account of the conduct and fate of Judas on the morning after the apprehension of Jesus. I will give it with the context, Matt. xxvii. 1-11 : —

“ But in the morning, early, all the chief priests and the elders of the people met in council to devise how they might procure the death of Jesus. And, having bound him, they carried him before Pilate the governor, to deliver him up to him. [Then Judas, who had put him in their power, seeing that he was condemned, repented, and carried back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in betraying the blood of an innocent man. But they said to him, What is that to us? Do you look to it. And he threw down the money in the temple, and withdrew, and went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the money, said, It is not lawful to put it into the sacred treasury, since it is the price of blood. And, after consulting together, they determined to purchase with it the Potter's Field, as a burial-place for strangers. Hence that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what was said by Jeremiah the prophet: *And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him who was appraised, whom the children of Israel appraised; and they gave them for the Potter's Field, as the Lord had appointed for me.*] Then Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews? ”

At first view, this account of Judas has the aspect of an interpolation. It is inserted so as to disjoin a narrative, the different parts of which, when it is removed, come together as if they had been originally united. Whether it be or be not an interpolation,

it is clearly not in a proper place. The whole story apparently refers to a period subsequent to the point of time where it is introduced. Between the evening in which Jesus was apprehended and early in the morning, no circumstance could have occurred to produce a great change in such a mind as that of Judas, or in any other. When he betrayed his Master, he knew that he was delivering him into the hands of his enemies, whose immediate purpose it was to take his life. As the account is now placed, it is said, that, in the morning, Judas was affected with bitter remorse, because he saw that "Jesus was condemned." But no condemnation had yet been passed upon him by the Roman governor, and Judas could have had no new conviction that the Sanhedrim would use all their efforts to procure his death. Though it may be possible to put a different meaning on the words, yet the account, according to its obvious sense, represents Judas as having had an interview with the chief priests and the elders (that is, with the Sanhedrim) *in the temple*, which is irreconcilable with the course of events as represented by Matthew, in the context of the passage, as well as by the other evangelists. Matthew could not have described the Sanhedrim as holding a council in the house of Caiaphas, and proceeding thence to the house of Pilate, and also as being in the temple, where Judas returned them their money, and they deliberated what they should do with it.

The account of Judas we are considering is irreconcilable with that given by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles (chap. i. 18, 19). Luke says:—

"This man purchased a field with the reward of his iniquity, and, falling headlong, burst asunder, so that all his bowels gushed out: and this was known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language *Aceldama*; that is, *The Field of Blood*."

When Luke says that "this was known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem," we understand him as meaning that it was a common report in Jerusalem, and that he himself believed it. I will not remark on the attempts which have been made to force his account into correspondence with that now found in Matthew's Gospel. To me it seems clear, that, if Luke's be correct, that which we are examining must be erroneous in every particular. But there is no doubt that the passage quoted from the Acts

is genuine; and Luke, in giving the common report, may be presumed to have stated what was believed by the apostles, as well as others.

In the conclusion of the account found in Matthew's Gospel, there is an extraordinary misuse of a passage of Zechariah, which the writer professes to quote from Jeremiah. I put out of view the notion, that he may have found words answering to what he has given in an apocryphal book ascribed to Jeremiah, of which we nowhere find mention except in a single passage of Jerome, more than three centuries after the Gospel of Matthew was written. The mistake of the name Jeremiah for Zechariah seems to show that the writer quoted from memory; and this may serve in part to explain the strange use which he makes of the words of the latter. The changes of sense, which could not have had this origin, may be accounted for by the allegorical and cabalistical modes of interpreting the Old Testament that existed among the Jews. The passage of Zechariah (chap. xi. 12, 13), may be thus translated:—

“Then I said to them, If it seem good in your eyes, give me my wages. If not, keep them. And they weighed for my wages thirty shekels of silver. And Jehovah said to me, Cast it into the treasury, the goodly price at which I was valued by them. And I took the thirty shekels of silver, and cast them into the house of Jehovah, into the treasury.”\*

The word here rendered “treasury” commonly means “potter;” and the only reason for not so rendering it in the present case is the difficulty of explaining why a potter should be spoken of as being in the house of the Lord. In the quotation found in Matthew, “the potter” is changed into “the Potter’s Field.”

The inapplicability of the words of Zechariah to the purpose for which they are cited in the passage under consideration needs no illustration. Similar perversions of the Old Testament, by changing the words and sense of the original, may be found in the Rabbinical writings; but no other quotation of the same character is

\* I give the translation of my friend, the Rev Professor Noyes (New Translation of the Hebrew Prophets, iii 210). Jehovah considers the wages of the prophet as his own wages, and the contempt of the prophet the same as the contempt of himself.

adduced by Matthew. If we believe the first two chapters to be the work of another hand, we may say that he has nothing resembling this quotation from Zechariah. On the contrary, in the quotations which are found elsewhere in his Gospel, the *applicability* of the words of the original to the subject about which he has used them is apparent. This fact indicates the habit of his mind, from which we conclude that it is not probable the quotation in question was made by him.

### III.

#### MATTHEW, CHAP. XXVII., PART OF VER 52 AND 53.

Another passage which one may believe to have been interpolated in the copy, or in copies, of the original Hebrew used by the translator, is that answering to the words of the following quotation which are included in brackets.

“ And lo ! the veil of the temple was torn asunder from the top to the bottom ; and the earth was shaken, and the rocks were rent, and the sepulchres laid open ; [and many bodies of saints who slept were raised, and, leaving their sepulchres, after his resurrection, entered the holy city and appeared to many.] ”

Who, it may be asked, were these saints ? Not disciples of Christ ; for *many* of them had not died. Not unconverted Jews of that time ; for to them such a title would not be applied. How long had they lain in their sepulchres ? We cannot but suppose, that corruption had done its work on the larger portion ; and is it to be thought, that God would re-create, as it were, those mouldering bodies without some purpose far different from what can be discerned ? What purpose, indeed, can be discerned ? They appeared, it is said, to many ; but we do not find that any converts were made in consequence, nor can we perceive that any good whatever followed, directly or indirectly, from their appearance. Supposing the story to be true, many to whom they did not appear would regard it as a fable ; and its circulation would only tend to throw discredit on the testimony to the resurrection of Christ himself. Were those saints in fact recalled to life, and did they die again, and their bodies resume their places, when their supposed mission to the living was accomplished ? Is it possible, if such an astonishing miracle had been performed. — a

miracle more adapted to excite consternation than any in the whole history of the evangelists, — that one really acquainted with such a fact should have known nothing of the consequences that must have resulted from it, or that, knowing those consequences, he should not have thought it worth while to record them? Is it likely, that so strange a marvel, about which all Jerusalem must have been full of excitement, should have been mentioned but by one evangelist, and that so slightly? Is it credible, that when, as far as we know, but three individuals were restored to life by Jesus himself, and this in solemn attestation of his divine mission, many bodies of saints should have been raised under such circumstances as that the fact should contribute little or nothing to establish the truth of our religion?

*After Christ's resurrection*, it is said, they left their sepulchres, and went into the holy city. In this extraordinary statement we may recognize, I think, the fabrication of some relater of the story. He apprehended, that, if the saints were represented as rising and appearing on the day when Christ was crucified, it might seem to deprive him of the title of *First-born from the dead*; and therefore had recourse to the not very successful expedient of postponing their appearance till after his resurrection.

If these views are correct, the story must be regarded as a fable; probably one which, in common, perhaps, with others now utterly forgotten, was in circulation among the Hebrew converts after the destruction of Jerusalem. Some possessor of a manuscript of Matthew's Hebrew Gospel may be supposed to have noted it in the margin of his copy, whence it found its way into the text of others, one or more of which fell into the hands of the Greek translator.

In connection with the mention of supposed interpolations in the Gospels, I have referred to the words ascribed to our Lord, in the fortieth verse of the twelfth chapter of Matthew.\* On this passage I remark below.†

\* See before, p. 17, note.

† I do not speak of the passage in the text, because I do not believe it to be an interpolation. I give the words in brackets, with those preceding:—

## IV.

## THE CONCLUSION OF MARK'S GOSPEL. (CHAP. XVI. 9-20)

We pass to the Gospel of Mark. In this there is but one passage that demands consideration. It consists of the last twelve verses of his Gospel, from the ninth verse of the sixteenth chapter, inclusive, to the end.

"A wicked and apostate race would have a sign; but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet. [For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth]"

The words of our Lord are thus reported by Luke, chap. xi. 29, 30:—

"This is a wicked race. It would have a sign; but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. For such a sign as Jonah was to the Ninevites will the Son of man be to this generation."

If we regard what is given by Luke as a correct report of what was said by Jesus, we may suppose, that the explanation of the sign of Jonah, by a comparison of his being three days and three nights in the belly of a fish with our Lord's being three days and three nights in a tomb, which is found in Matthew, but not in Luke, was introduced into our Lord's discourse during the time that it was preserved by oral tradition. His own brief words leaving his meaning undefined, they were understood by some as referring to the extraordinary marvel related in the story of Jonah; and, being so understood, this explanation became connected with them. There seems to be no reason for supposing, that it was inserted in Matthew's Gospel by any other than the evangelist himself

But it cannot readily be believed, that our Lord would have represented his being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth as the only sign of his divine mission to be given to the Jews. This would have been admitting what they had just implied, that no sign of his divine mission had already been given them.

Nor, if we regard as fabulous the story that Jonah remained alive for three days and three nights in a fish by which he had been swallowed, is it credible that our Lord would have referred to a fiction of this sort in the manner represented; especially as it does not appear from the narrative concerning Jonah, that the supposed miracle was any sign to the Ninevites, or was even known to them.

It may be added, that our Lord is made to say, that he would be three days and three nights in the tomb. He was, in fact, laid in the tomb on the night of Friday,—probably late at night,—and rose before the dawn of Sunday morning; and no use of language can be produced which may justify the calling of such a period of time three days and three nights. Its being

It is remarkable, that while Griesbach does not, in his New Testament, affix to them any mark of doubt, he argues at length against their genuineness in his *Commentarius Criticus*. The state of external testimony respecting them is as follows:—

They are not found in the Vatican manuscript. In the Codex Stephani 7, after the eighth verse, it is said, *The following also is extant*, which words precede a short conclusion undoubtedly spurious, and then come the words, *This also is extant*; after which

so called can, I think, be accounted for only by the loose manner in which the Jews were wont to accommodate together passages of the Old Testament, and events of which they regarded those passages as descriptive, prophetic, or typical. Of this it is not a remarkable example.

The meaning of the words of Jesus, as reported by Luke, and also by Matthew, with the omission of those under consideration, may be thus explained:—

Jesus was surrounded by men full of bigotry, evil passions, and mortal hatred towards himself,—men who were resisting the strongest evidences of his divine mission, ascribing his miracles to the agency of Satan, and demanding in mockery some sign of his divine mission, some manifestation of God's power in attestation of it, as if the most striking attestations of it had not been already given. His view turned to that destruction of their nation which was impending over the Jews, as the punishment of their rejection of him. No sign, he says, will be given to this wicked and apostate race, no manifestation of God's power will be made to them which they will believe and feel to be such, except a prophet of destruction such as Jonah was to the Ninevites, whose warnings—to pursue the train of thought which was in the mind of our Lord—will be disregarded, and whose predictions of ruin will be accomplished.

Thus he immediately subjoins: “The men of Nineveh will rise up before the judgment-seat with this race, and condemn it: for they reformed upon the preaching of Jonah; and lo! one greater than Jonah is here.”

However fabulous may be the story of Jonah, there was nothing unsuitable to our Lord's character in thus using it. Speakers and writers of every age and country have resorted to well-known works of fiction as readily as to authentic history for analogies and exemplifications fitted to affect the imaginations of their hearers or readers. It would be folly to suppose, that, in doing so, they meant to vouch for the truth of the books which they have thus quoted. It is only in the reasonings of divines that these facts have been overlooked,—in those reasonings in which our Lord and the writers of the New Testament have been considered as giving their authority for the truth and for the genuineness of all books referred to or quoted by them.



follow the twelve verses in question. In more than forty other manuscripts, they are accompanied by various remarks, to the effect "that they were wanting in some, but found in the ancient copies;" "that they were in many copies;" "that they had been considered spurious, and were wanting in most copies;" "that they were not in the more accurate copies;" and, on the other hand, "that they were generally in accurate copies."

In the other manuscripts of the Gospels beside those mentioned, the passage in question is found without remark; and likewise in all the ancient versions, with the exception of the Armenian (in the manuscripts of which, as appears, it is either omitted or marked as of doubtful credit), and likewise of the copy of an Arabic version preserved in the Vatican Library.

The nineteenth verse is distinctly quoted by Irenæus as from the Gospel of Mark; \* and the passage in question appears to have been recognized as genuine by some other fathers. † But no part of it is quoted by Origen. According to Eusebius, almost all the copies of Mark's Gospel, including the most accurate, ended with what is now the eighth verse. ‡ Gregory of Nyssa states, that the passage was not found in the more accurate copies; § and Jerome says, that it was but in few, being wanting in almost all the *Greek* manuscripts. || I pass over other authorities against it of less importance.

This state of the external evidence is such as to render the genuineness of the passage suspicious; especially when we consider, that it was the natural tendency of transcribers rather to preserve than to reject what they found in an exemplar before them. They had the feeling, that it rendered their copy more complete. To reject was to assume responsibility; to retain was yielding to authority; and, in addition, there has always been a strong, however irrational, sentiment, that, when there is a doubt whether a passage may not be a portion of Sacred Writ, it

\* Cont. Hæres., lib. iii. c. 10, § 6, p. 188.

† Not, however, by Clement of Rome, nor Justin, who are cited as quoting it in the editions of the New Testament by Griesbach and Scholz, nor I think, by Clement of Alexandria, who is also adduced.

‡ *Questiones ad Marimum*, pp. 61, 62.

§ *Orat. ii. in Christi Resurrect.*; *Opp.* iii. 411.

|| *Ad Hedibian, de Questionibus*; *Opp.* iv. pars i. col. 172.

is profane to reject it, — a sentiment of which we have had full proof in our day; the manifest corruptions found in the Received Text of the New Testament being, some of them, still inserted in editions of the original, and all of them retained in the Common English Version, as published by authority. The dread of taking from Scripture any thing which might be a part of it has been far stronger than the apprehension, at least equally reasonable, of adding to Scripture something not belonging to it. Thus, Eusebius, after mentioning that some rejected the passage under consideration, as wanting in most copies, and among them the most accurate, adds, that “others, not daring to reject any thing whatever that is extant, through any circumstance, in the manuscripts of the Gospels, say that there is here a double reading, as in many other places, and that both are to be received, because the faithful and pious will not undertake to decide in favor of one rather than the other.” \*

But, in addition to this common feeling, transcribers must have been peculiarly reluctant to reject the passage before us; for, if struck off, it leaves the Gospel of Mark, in its conclusion, strangely incomplete and unsatisfactory. This, which every one feels, must have been felt by them. It is, I conceive, the main argument for the genuineness of the passage, and one which at first view may seem almost conclusive.

Before, however, considering this argument, we will attend to the internal character of the passage, to ascertain what proof this may afford respecting the point at issue.

There is, then, a difference so great between the use of language in this passage, and its use in the undisputed portion of Mark's Gospel, as to furnish strong reason for believing the passage not genuine. I give examples in a note below.†

\* *Questiones ad Marinum*, p. 62.

† There are various words and modes of expression peculiar to this passage, not connected with the expression of any thing peculiar to its subject; but, on the contrary, of such a character, that, if they had been familiar to Mark, they would probably have occurred elsewhere in his writings. Such are the following:—

Ver. 9. *πρώτη σαββάτου*, instead of *μία σαββάτων*, the expression used by Mark a little before, and by all the other evangelists, in speaking of the day. *Πρώτη σαββάτου* occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.

To proceed to other considerations: In the ninth verse (the first of the disputed passage), Mary Magdalene is described as if unknown to the reader, — “Mary Magdalene, from whom he cast out seven demons.” Now, as she had been mentioned by Mark several times within a few preceding pages, it is not likely that this mode of designating her, to be expected only concerning an individual first introduced to notice, should have been used by him. It seems to have been the work of the author of the addition, writing with too little reference to what preceded in the Gospel.

The words ascribed to our Saviour in these verses differ so much in their character from any elsewhere recorded as his, either by Mark or any other of the evangelists, that it is difficult to believe them to have been uttered by him. “And he said to his disciples, Go to all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized, shall be safe; he who disbelieves, shall be condemned. And these signs shall accompany those who believe. in my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak new languages; they shall take up serpents; if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the diseased, and they shall be well.” In these words, represented as the last that Jesus addressed to his apostles, there appears a want of that moral dignity which is characteristic of his discourses, and which we should above all expect upon this occasion. The particular enumeration of miracles to be performed is not in his manner. He would not, in giving his last solemn charge to his apostles, have turned away their thoughts from a

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Ver. 10. *ἐκείνη*, and ver. 11. *κῆκεῖτοι*. This use of *ἐκείνη*, not demonstrative nor emphatical, occurs nowhere else in Mark's Gospel.

Ver. 10. The expression *οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ γενομένοι* to denote the disciples of Jesus, of which use of the words there is no other example in the New Testament.

Ver. 19. *ὁ κύριος*, and ver. 20. *τοῦ κυρίου*. Mark in his own person nowhere else applies this title to Christ.

Passing over the words peculiar to this passage, the use of which may be accounted for from something peculiar in its subject, the following nowhere else occur in the Gospel of Mark: 1. *πορεύομαι*, the participles of which are used three times; 2. *θιάσσω*, used as a verb, and likewise as its participle; 3. *ἀπιστίω*, verb and participle; 4. *μετὰ ταῦτα*; 5. *ἔσθω*; 6. *ὑστερον*; 7. *παράκολουθίω*; 8. *ἐλάττω*; 9. *μὲν οὖν*; 10. *πανταχοῦ*; 11. *συνεργέω*; 12. *θεβαίω*; 13. *ἐπακολουθεῖω*.

consideration of their high duties to an anticipation of the various miraculous powers which they and other believers were to possess. Some of the miracles enumerated are of a kind very different from those which he and his apostles were accustomed to perform. They do not, like their works of mercy, bear in their very character the stamp of a divine mission. They were liable to be confounded with the tricks of pretended magicians. Some of the powers promised could be of no use to others, and of none to the possessor, except in case of a rare accident. But, above all, if, as I think is certain, miraculous powers were not granted to believers generally, then this promise that they would be so granted — “These signs shall accompany those who believe” — could not have been uttered by Christ, and, we may conclude with almost equal confidence, could not have been ascribed to him by the evangelist.

There is, throughout these verses, an extraordinary conciseness of narration, very different from the common manner of Mark, who usually details facts in more words and with more circumstances than any other of the evangelists. It is the manner of one adding only what he thought necessary to form some proper conclusion to the Gospel.

But on the other hand, to recur to the argument before mentioned, it may be said, that it is incredible that Mark should have left his Gospel with so abrupt and unsatisfactory an ending as it must have had, if he had broken off with the eighth verse of the last chapter; and that this consideration alone is sufficient to do away the whole force of the preceding remarks. I allow it to be incredible that Mark should thus have ended his Gospel designedly and by choice; but it is not incredible that he should have been interrupted in his labors by accident. What that accident was, must be a matter of conjecture. But there is nothing incredible or improbable in supposing, that *some* accident may have occurred to prevent him from finishing his Gospel as he intended; and there are historical circumstances which afford ground for conjecturing what that accident may have been.

According to ancient accounts, of which there is no reason for doubting the essential correctness, the apostle Peter, near the close of his life, went to Rome, with Mark for his companion. He

there preached the gospel, while Mark, as is related, composed, at the request of his hearers, a written gospel, of which his preaching was the basis. But the terrible persecution of the Christians under Nero broke out in the year 64; and in that or the following year, as appears probable, Peter was crucified. Here all authentic accounts of Mark end; for the story of his going from Rome and preaching at Alexandria can be traced no higher than to a hearsay of Eusebius, and is connected with relations of a nature wholly to destroy its credit. In that persecution, Mark may have perished also; or, if he did not, the anguish of mind which he must have suffered, or imprisonment, or a rapid flight from the city, or some other cause connected with that period of frightful distress and anxiety, may have prevented him from completing his work. Copies of it, however, being taken in its imperfect state, we may suppose, that, at an early period, some individual possessing one of these, who was procuring new transcripts to be made, added the brief conclusion which we now find, in order to complete the work. As the history is in fact unfinished without it, it soon came to be considered by very many as a part of the original Gospel, or as a proper addition to it; and it has thus, we may suppose, found its way into a great majority of our present copies.

## V.

LUKE, CHAP. IX. 55, 56.

When our Lord and his disciples were refused hospitality by the Samaritans of a certain village, which was an act of peculiar disrespect according to the notions of that age and country, James and John, in common, doubtless, with the other disciples, were indignant at such treatment. They recollected what, according to the Jewish history, had been the dealings of prophets of old with those who offended them; they were disposed, on this as on other occasions, to take the lead among the disciples; and, under the excitement of the moment, they addressed Jesus with the question, "Master, shall we call down fire from heaven and destroy them? — as Elijah did.

"But he turned and rebuked them; [and said, Ye know not of what spirit ye are. For the Son of man came not to destroy

men's lives, but to save them.] And they went to another village."

We can conceive of no words more appropriate to the occasion, more suitable to the character of our Lord, or better fitted to repress and correct the wrong feelings of his disciples. They conveyed a reproof full of instruction, expressed at once in the mildest and the most effectual form.

One who is not a critical student of the New Testament may therefore be surprised to learn, that these words were probably not in the Gospel of Luke as written by him. They are wanting in a large majority of the oldest and most important manuscripts.

The omission of a passage which was part of the original text of a work must be the result either of accident or of design. No accident can be supposed which would lead to the concurrent omission of a passage in many manuscripts, which, like those in the present case, were written independently of one another; that is, of which one was not copied from another. There is only one class of accidents of omission which admits of any particular explanation, such as may justify us in supposing the possibility, that an accident of this class, affecting a particular passage, might occur in a few unconnected copies. The omissions referred to are those which proceed from the circumstance, that one clause ends with the same word or the same series of syllables as another following it, so that the eye of a transcriber may glance from the former to the latter ending, and omit the intervening words, — omissions in consequence of an *homoiototeuton* (that is, "like ending"), as they are technically called. But this cause of omission does not exist in the passage before us.

If, then, the words ascribed to Jesus originally made a part of Luke's Gospel, they must have been omitted by design; and this supposition has been resorted to. It has been suggested, that they were struck out by catholic Christians, that the Marcionites might not use them in defence of their opinions.\*

As I have elsewhere (*ante*, pp. 170, 171) more fully explained, the Marcionites, in common with the other Gnostics, regarded Judaism as a very imperfect dispensation, with which

\* "Orthodoxi hæc videntur delevisse, ne Marcionitæ haberent quo se tuerentur." — Wetstein, *ad locum*.

Christianity in many respects stood in contrast; they conceived of it as proceeding, not from the true God, but from an inferior god, who had fashioned this material world; and they believed, that the apostles generally, through their Jewish prejudices, did not fully comprehend the character of Christianity. In the passage before us, our Lord is represented as saying to two of the principal apostles, "Ye know not of what spirit ye are;" that is, as I doubt not that the words should be understood, "Ye know not the spirit of my religion;" and in his own conduct he presents the spirit of Christianity in contrast with what was conceived to be the spirit of Judaism, as exemplified in the story concerning Elijah.\* The passage, therefore, is one which the Marcionites might naturally have thought to be very much to their purpose.

But we cannot thus account for its omission. Nor can we adopt any other supposition, which is designed to explain its absence from so many copies, on the ground of there being something obnoxious in its character.

There is no evidence, and no probability, that transcribers among catholic Christians were accustomed to omit passages through the influence of any theological prejudice, or because they might seem to them to present a difficulty, of whatever kind that might be. If such had been the fact, there must have been abundant evidence of it in the present state of the authorities for settling the text of the New Testament; but such evidence does not exist. Catholic Christians, to say nothing of their reverence for the Scriptures, were not so deficient in honesty and in good sense as to adopt or countenance such a course. In regard to the passage before us, every transcriber must have shrunk from thus dealing with the words of Jesus himself. Without doubt, likewise, the generality of those engaged in the transcription and sale of books pursued their business as a trade, and troubled themselves little about the bearing of particular passages.

But should we admit that some few transcribers were so alarmed at the use which the Marcionites might make of the passage, that, though they could not expunge it from the copies of the Marcionites, they struck it out of their own; or that they were, for any other reason, so scandalized at the words of our Lord, that they

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\* The story is told in 2 Kings, chap. i.

resolved not to be concerned in preserving them, — yet their misconduct could affect only the copies which they transcribed. If we suppose the omission to have been made after the controversy with the Marcionites had commenced, it could not have affected many thousands of copies already spread over the world, nor those copies which might be made by more trustworthy transcribers; nor could it have counteracted the constant tendency there would have been to fill up the gap which had been left, — the tendency among transcribers, of which I have before spoken, to insert, and not to omit. We cannot, therefore, account for the absence of the passage from so many copies on the ground of intentional omission.

But it is further to be observed, that the Marcionites made no use of the words of our Lord, though apparently so much to their purpose. If they had done so, we should have evidence of the fact in the writings of their opponents, particularly of Tertullian. But nothing to that effect appears. This is the more remarkable, as Tertullian, in his long work against Marcion, twice notices the use which the Marcionites made of the narrative, by contrasting the conduct of Jesus and Elijah,\* but refers to no appeal made by them to the words of Jesus. Had those words been generally recognized as genuine in the time of the earlier Marcionites, they could hardly have failed to use them.

In discussing the question, whether a passage omitted in certain manuscripts should or should not be considered as a part of the original text, it has not been uncommon to array on one side the authorities which recognize it as genuine, and on the other side those which do not. The intrinsic value of one class of authorities, considered in reference to their general character, is then weighed against that of the other class, and the passage is judged to be genuine or not, according as either class preponderates, — except, indeed, that a zeal for defending the Received Text often causes the critic to lay a heavy hand upon the scale in which are placed the authorities for retaining it. But this mode of reasoning is wholly fallacious. If a passage be genuine, we

\* *Advers. Marcion*, lib. iv. c. 23, p. 438; c. 29, p. 446.



may reasonably expect to find it, not in a majority of the copies of the work to which it belongs, but in all the copies, except so far as in particular cases a satisfactory reason may be assigned for its omission. If there be any copy in which it is not found, this is a fact to be accounted for. An interpolation may be extant in a majority of copies. It may have been originally inserted inconsiderately or fraudulently. It may by mistake have been taken from the margin into the text, — a mistake of so very frequent occurrence, that I am obliged often to refer to it.\* Having been once inserted, its spread from one copy to many is easily explained by the uncritical habits of transcribers, and their disposition to retain whatever they found given as a part of the text before them. The noted passage interpolated in the Jewish Antiquities of Josephus, in which mention is made of Jesus, is not only quoted by a series of Christian fathers from Eusebius downward, but is extant at the present day in all the manuscripts of that work. It appears, therefore, that the genuineness of a passage is not established by its being found in a majority of the most important copies of the work of which it may be supposed to be a part. To satisfy the conditions of proof required, it should be found in all; unless (as I have said) a sufficient and probable cause can be assigned for its absence.

These are general principles of criticism, to be kept in view in regard to the passage before us, and others which we are about to consider. The present passage, indeed, is *not* found in a majority of the most important manuscripts; but it is found in a large majority of the manuscripts of Luke's Gospel, taken indiscriminately, and in many of the versions.

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\* A marginal note has crept into the text, says Porson in his Letters to Travis (pp 149, 150), "not merely in hundreds or thousands, but in millions of places. *Natura*, says Daillé, *ita comparatum est, ut auctorum probatorum libros plerique omnes amplios quam breves malint; verentes scilicet, ne quid sibi desit, quod auctoris vel sit vel esso dicatur*. To the same purpose Bengelius: *Non facile pro superfluo aliquid hodie habent complures docti viri* (he might have added, *omnesque indocti*), *eâdemque mente plerique quondam librarii fuere*. From this known propensity of transcribers to turn every thing into text which they found written in the margin of their manuscripts or between the lines, so many interpolations have proceeded, that at present the surest canon of criticism is, *Præferatur lectio brevior*."

Its omission in the copies in which it is not found cannot, as we have seen, be accounted for as having been caused either by accident or by design. We must conclude, therefore, that it did not make a part of the original text of Luke's Gospel.

But, on the other hand, the words carry with them strong intrinsic proof that they were spoken by Jesus. Nor can we imagine any reason why, if not uttered by him, they should have been invented and ascribed to him.

In this state of the case, the only solution of the appearances that present themselves seems to be, that the words ascribed to our Lord were spoken by him; that they were preserved in the memories of those who heard him, and communicated by them to others; and that, not having been recorded by Luke, they were first written in the margin, and then introduced into the text of his Gospel.

But the appearances are such, that, this general explanation being given, we must enter further into particulars. The Cambridge manuscript and some other authorities omit only the last words ascribed to our Lord, and preserve the first; namely, "*Ye know not of what spirit ye are.*" And some manuscripts, including the Vatican and the Codex Stephani  $\eta$ , which omit all our Lord's words, omit also the words, "*As Elijah did.*" It may seem, therefore, that the account of the words of our Lord and his disciples was not introduced in a complete form at once, but that the text owes its present state to marginal additions made at three different times; first, the words, "*As Elijah did,*" being written down, as these are wanting in the smallest number of manuscripts, then those first spoken by our Lord, and then his remaining words.

## VI.

### LUKE, CHAP. XXII. 43, 44.

In the Gospel of Luke there is but one other passage of any importance, the genuineness of which there seems good reason for doubting. It consists of the forty-third and forty-fourth verses of the twenty-second chapter.

"And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And, being in an agony, he prayed the more ear-

nestly; and his sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground."

Not to mention some other authorities of little consequence, these verses are wanting in the Alexandrine and Vatican manuscripts. They are likewise not in the Sahidic version. In ten manuscripts, three of them in uncial letters, they are marked as doubtful.

They are not quoted by Origen or by Tertullian. The fact is remarkable, especially as regards the latter writer, in whose earnest arguments against those heretics who denied that Christ had a body of flesh and blood, no passage in the Gospels would have seemed more to his purpose.

In the fourth century, Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, says, "We ought not to be ignorant, that in very many Greek and Latin manuscripts (*in Græcis et in Latinis codicibus complurimis*) nothing is to be found concerning the coming of the angel, or the bloody sweat." \*

Jerome, in writing against the Pelagians, reproaches them with believing that men can will what is good without the grace of God, when even the Saviour was strengthened by an angel. "In some copies," he says, both Greek and Latin (*in quibusdam exemplaribus tam Græcis quam Latinis*), we find that "*there appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him,*" &c., to the end of the passage.† Jerome was not of a temper to understate facts from which he was reasoning; and, when he says that it was found in some copies, we may conclude, that it was, as Hilary says, wanting in very many.

Epiphanius likewise reasons from the passage, his purpose being to prove the double nature of Christ. But he says of it, "It is found in Luke's Gospel, in those copies which have not been subjected to a revision; and the holy Irenæus, in his work against Heresies, uses it as an argument to confute those who denied the real body of Christ: ‡ but orthodox persons struck it out through fear, not understanding its bearing and its great force." §

\* De Trinitate, lib. x. § 41; Opp. col. 1062.

† Adversus Pelagianos, lib. ii.; Opp. iv. pars ii. col. 521.

‡ It is referred to by Irenæus, lib. iii. c. 22, § 2, p. 219.

§ Ancorat., § xxxi.; Opp. ii. 36.

Epiphanius does not assert that it was found in many copies of his time. It was found, he says, in those which had not been *revised*, that is, inspected, after the transcriber had done his work, by some person responsible for the correctness of the text,—a care which was undoubtedly taken of all copies pretending to accuracy. It was found in so few, that, in order to prove its genuineness, he appeals to its being quoted by Irenæus; and not venturing to assert, as he undoubtedly would have done if he had dared, that it had been expunged by heretics, he lays the charge upon “orthodox persons,”—a charge utterly improbable.

After the prevalence, in the fifth century, of the *Monophysite* heresy,—the heresy which ascribed but a single nature to Christ, and that the divine,—the passage became a favorite text with the orthodox, as proving his double nature. It had, much earlier, been used by Irenæus against those who denied the real body of Christ. Thus recommended to the favor of the early Christians, and of the orthodox of later times, it readily made its way into a great majority of our extant authorities, assisted, doubtless, by the operation of the principle which led those who had the care of the transcription of manuscripts rather to admit what was of doubtful credit, than to reject what might be a part of Scripture. We have proof from writers of the ninth and tenth centuries of its use in the Monophysite controversy, and, at the same time, of its continued absence from many copies; for they charge its omission upon the Monophysite Christians of Syria and Armenia.\*

The objections which present themselves to the passage, considered in its intrinsic character, are the following:—The agony of Christ is represented as existing after the angel had been sent to strengthen him. The bloody sweat described is such as we have no authority for believing was ever produced by mere distress of mind, if it have been by any other cause. The account appears at variance with the character of Christ, and especially with that calmness, self-possession, and firmness which he manifested during the evening and night previous to his apprehension, before and after separating from his disciples on Mount Olivet; and with which his expressions of great suffering, recorded by the other

\* Vide Wetsten. Nov. Test., *ad locum*.

evangelists, present nothing inconsistent. It does not appear how any one could have witnessed, or become acquainted with, the events related; for Jesus had removed to a distance from his disciples, and, when he returned, found them asleep. There is nothing improbable in the supposition, that, even amid the horror of those moments, he told them, for their benefit, in a few brief words, what had been the purport of his prayer; and he might, indeed, have also communicated the facts in question, supposing them to have occurred. But had they really been made known by him, under such circumstances, they were adapted to produce so deep and lasting an impression upon the feelings, that an apostle, as Matthew, could hardly have forborne to relate them. We should expect to find them mentioned, not by one evangelist only, but by all.

It may be observed further, that, if this passage be struck out, the parts of the text which it separates come together, as if the passage had been interposed between them, without any appearance of a chasm.

We may suppose, then, that it was a passage first written in the margin of some very early manuscript, and subsequently, through the mistake of transcribers, taken into the text of other copies. The narrative perhaps owes its present form to a misunderstanding of language. It having been said, that Jesus, in his agony, received strength from on high, and angels being regarded by the Jews as the ministers of God, it was inferred, we may suppose, that he was strengthened by the mission of an angel. There is likewise ground for believing, that "to weep blood" was anciently an expression for weeping bitterly, and that "to sweat blood" was used to denote a violent struggle; and the account before us may have arisen from taking such figurative language in too literal a sense.

If the passage were, as I think, originally a marginal addition, it must have been made in an early age, and have soon been taken into the text of some manuscripts; for it is quoted by Justin Martyr in the following words, which are remarkable from apparently involving a reference to Luke, as one of the companions of the apostles: "In those Memoirs which I affirm to have been composed by apostles of Christ and their companions, it is said that *sweat like drops of blood flowed from him while pray-*

*ing.*"\* A little later, as we have seen, it was quoted by Irenæus. It is said to have been alleged by Hippolytus, not long afterwards, in proof of the human as well as divine nature of Christ.† But I find no reference to its appearing in the writings of any other of the fathers, before the notice of it already quoted from Hilary, about the middle of the fourth century.

## VII.

### JOHN, CHAP. V. 3, 4.

We proceed to the Gospel of John. The first passage to be noticed is the account of the descent of an angel into the Sheep-pool at Jerusalem. I will give the words which are probably spurious in their connection, putting them within brackets.

JOHN V. 1-8. — "After this there was a festival of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now, there is at Jerusalem, by the Sheep-gate, a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a number of diseased persons, blind, lame, withered, [waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel, at certain times, descended into the pool, and troubled the water; then whoever first entered it, after the troubling of the water, was cured of whatever disease afflicted him.] And there was a man there who had been diseased for thirty-eight years. This man Jesus saw lying, and, knowing that his disease had now continued for a long time, said to him, Wilt thou be made well? The sick man answered him, Master, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is troubled. But, while I am going, some other descends before me. Jesus says to him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

The whole of the doubtful passage is omitted in the Vatican manuscript, in the Ephrem as first written, in two others of less note, in manuscripts of the Coptic version, and in some one or more of the Sahidic; and Nonnus, who, about the beginning of the fifth century, wrote a metrical paraphrase of the Gospel of

\* Dial. cum Tryph., p. 361.

† Hippolytus is quoted to this effect by Theodoret in his *Eranistes*, Dial. li.; Opp. iv. p. 82.

John, says nothing of the descent of an angel, but speaks of the water as *rushing forth in spontaneous jets*.

The fourth verse, beginning, *For an angel, &c.*, is omitted in the Cambridge manuscript and one other, and is marked as doubtful in more than fifteen others. It is wanting in the manuscripts of the Armenian version generally, and in several of the old Latin versions.

On the other hand, this verse being retained, the last clause of the third, *waiting for the moving of the waters*, is wanting in the Alexandrine manuscript, as first written, the Codex Stephani η, and one other.

I find no historical remarks respecting the omission or insertion of the story of the descent of an angel. It is referred to by Tertullian,\* but it is not noticed in the extant works of any other Christian writer before Ambrose and Chrysostom in the fourth century.

The pool spoken of in the passage appears to have been fed by an intermitting spring. The story of the descent of the angel was founded on the superstition of the Jews, who, in common with the Heathens, were accustomed to ascribe any remarkable natural phenomenon to supernatural agency. What the former accounted for by the descent of an angel, the latter might have explained by some mythological fable. The circumstances of the case altogether preclude the supposition, that, in giving this solution, there was any pretence that the descent of the angel was visible.

In the simple narrative, which alone, I conceive, is to be ascribed to St. John, something, as is not uncommon with the evangelists, is left unexplained; namely, what is meant by the moving of the waters, and why it was supposed that then only they had a sanative power. This, I presume, led some early possessor or transcriber of a manuscript of his Gospel to write the popular account in its margin, whence it was assumed into the text of others. But for its omission, or the marks of doubt with which it is inserted, no satisfactory reason can be given, supposing it to have been originally written by St. John.†

\* De Baptismo, c. 5, p. 226.

† In the passage the following words occur, not elsewhere used by John: ἐκδέχομαι, ὅποτε, κατέχω, and νόσημα, — beside κίνησις and κατὰ καιρὸν, the use of which in this passage alone may be accounted for by the nature of its subject.

We have reason to believe that St. John did not adopt the error of his countrymen respecting the agency of an angel in the case in question, because he appears to have been free from another much more general. He ascribes no diseases to demoniacal possession.

### VIII.

JOHN, CHAP VII. 53—VIII. 11.

The narrative of the woman taken in adultery is omitted in so many copies, and marked as doubtful or spurious in so many others, that, reasoning on the principles which have been laid down, we may conclude with confidence that it was not written by St. John. But I perceive no ground for questioning the truth of the account: it is related in a striking and natural manner, and bears an intrinsic character of probability.

There are, in different copies of this narrative, great variations of language, expressive of the same essential meaning. This may be accounted for in several ways. We may suppose that the story was first written in some other language than the Greek, and translated into this by two different hands; or that, being first written in Greek, and then translated into Latin, it is found in some copies, as the Cambridge manuscript for example, retranslated from the Latin into the Greek; or, what is perhaps as probable a solution as any, that it was written down in Greek by two different individuals, from the oral narration of St. John, and afterwards appended to his Gospel, in which it had not been inserted by himself. The passage may be thus rendered, according to what are perhaps the most probable readings:—

“And every one went to his house; and Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But in the morning he was again in the temple, and all the people came to him; and, having sat down, he was instructing them, when the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees brought a woman taken in adultery, and, placing her in the midst, said to him, Teacher, this woman was taken in the very act of adultery; and, in the Law, Moses commands us that such should be stoned to death: what now dost thou say? This they asked with a design to ensnare him, that they might have an accusation against him. Then Jesus, bending down, wrote with his finger



upon the ground. But, as they persisted in questioning him, he raised his head, and said to them, Let him among you who is without sin cast the first stone at her. And, bending down again, he wrote upon the ground. And, hearing this, they went out one by one, beginning with the oldest; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing in the midst. Then Jesus, raising his head, said to her, Woman, where are they? Did no one sentence thee? She said, No one, Master. Then Jesus said to her, Neither do I sentence thee: go and sin no more."

## IX.

JOHN, CHAP. XXI. 24, 25

It may seem that the words with which John's Gospel now concludes could hardly have been written by the apostle. He, I conceive, ended his Gospel thus: —

"This is the disciple who testifies concerning these things, and has written them."

The addition follows: —

["And we know that his testimony is true. And there are many other things that Jesus did, which, if they were severally written, I do not think that the world itself would contain the books written."]

It is hardly to be supposed, that the apostle would say of himself, "*We* know that *his* testimony is true," subjoining immediately after, "*I* do not think." This is not the style of any writer in speaking of himself. The extravagant hyperbole in the second sentence, also, is foreign from the style of St. John. The passage appears to be an editorial note, which, written probably at first a little separate from the text, became incorporated with it at a very early period.

According to ancient accounts, St. John wrote his Gospel at Ephesus, over the church in which city he presided during the latter part of his long life. It is not improbable, that, before his death, its circulation had been confined to the members of that church. Thence copies of it would be afterwards obtained; and the copy for transcription was, we may suppose, accompanied by the strong attestation which we now find, given by the church, or

the elders of the church, to their full faith in the accounts which it contained, and by the concluding remark made by the writer of this attestation in his own person.

There is no external authority, properly speaking, for rejecting this passage. In one manuscript, the last verse is omitted; and, in several others, it is said to have been thought by some to be an addition. The character of the language, however, is different from that of John.\*

I have thus gone through with all the passages of length or importance, in the Received Text of the Gospels, the genuineness of which appears to me improbable. It is obvious, that, should we adopt all the conclusions proposed, nothing would be detracted from the value of the Gospels. On the contrary, we should, I think, only remove from their text some blemishes and discordances by which it has been corrupted.

\* The use of *ὅσα* (*whatever*), as equivalent simply to the relative *ἃ* (*which, that*), is not common, and does not occur elsewhere in John. It was accordingly changed to *ἃ* by Origen, Chrysostom, and Cyril; and *ἃ* is substituted for it in the Vatican and other manuscripts. It is such a use of *ὅσος* as a native Greek might fall into from meeting with its frequent occurrence in the New Testament, without appreciating its exact force. *Καθ' ἑν* is nowhere else found in what was probably written by the apostle (It occurs once in the Apocalypse; and *εἰς καθ' εἰς* is a various reading in the interpolated passage in the eighth chapter of his Gospel) It is here used illogically, its proper meaning being *one by one, severally*; whereas the meaning intended is *all*. *Οἶμαι* (in this form) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament or Septuagint; nor is any form of *οἶμαι* elsewhere used by John.

## NOTE B.

(See pp. 61, 94, 100.)

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE CORRESPONDENCES AMONG THE  
FIRST THREE GOSPELS.

## SECTION I.

*Preliminary Statement.*

THE remarkable agreement among the first three Gospels has given occasion to many attempts to explain its origin. But generally, in the hypotheses that have been framed, it has not been sufficiently kept in mind, that its occurrence with so much that is dissimilar is one of the principal phenomena to be accounted for; and that, though our ultimate purpose be to solve the problem of the correspondences among those Gospels, it must embrace likewise a solution of their differences. Together with this, the appearances to be explained are as follows:—

Many portions of the history of Jesus are found in common in the first three Gospels; others are common to two of their number, but not found in the third. In the passages referred to, there is generally a similarity, sometimes a very great similarity, in the selection of particular circumstances, in the aspect under which the event is viewed, and the style in which it is related. Sometimes, the language found in different Gospels, though not identical, is equivalent, or nearly equivalent; and, not unfrequently, the same series of words, with or without slight variations, occurs throughout the whole or a great part of a sentence, and even in larger portions.

The occurrence of passages verbally the same, or strikingly coincident in the use of many of the same words, — which appearances I shall denote by the term *verbal coincidence*, or *verbal agreement*, — particularly demands attention. In maintaining the

hypothesis that the evangelists copied from common documents, much stress has been laid upon it; but its importance, as a ground of argument for that hypothesis, disappears, when the subject is more thoroughly examined, and viewed in a proper light. By far the larger portion of this verbal agreement is found in the recital of the words of others, and particularly of the words of Jesus. Thus, in Matthew's Gospel, the passages verbally coincident with one or both of the other two Gospels amount to less than a sixth part of its contents; and, of this, about seven-eighths occur in the recital of the words of others, and only about one-eighth in what, by way of distinction, I may call mere narrative, in which the evangelist, speaking in his own person, was unrestrained in the choice of his expressions. In Mark, the proportion of coincident passages to the whole contents of the Gospel is about one-sixth, of which not one-fifth occurs in the narrative. Luke has still less agreement of expression with the other evangelists. The passages in which it is found amount only to about a tenth part of his Gospel; and but an inconsiderable portion of it appears in the narrative, in which there are very few instances of its existence for more than half a dozen words together.\* In the narrative, it may be computed as less than a twentieth part.

These definite proportions are important, as showing distinctly in how small a part of each Gospel there is any verbal coincidence with either of the other two; and to how great a degree such coincidence is confined to passages in which the evangelists professedly give the words of others, particularly of Jesus.

The proportions should, however, be further compared with those which the narrative part of each Gospel bears to that in which the words of others are professedly repeated. Matthew's narrative occupies about one-fourth of his Gospel, Mark's about one-half, and Luke's about one-third. It may easily be computed, therefore, that the proportion of verbal coincidence found in the narrative part of each Gospel, compared with what exists in the other part, is about in the following ratios: in Matthew as one to somewhat more than two, in Mark as one to four, and in Luke as one to ten.

\* The most remarkable example is Luke ix. 16, where Luke coincides with both Matthew and Mark, through more than half a verse.

As a preliminary, then, toward accounting for the agreement of language in the first three Gospels, we must divide each of them into two portions; the one consisting of that part in which the evangelist speaks in his own person, and the other of words professedly not his own. Having done this, it appears from the statements before made, that the same cause could not have operated alone, in both these different portions, to produce coincidence of language. We cannot explain this phenomenon by the supposition, that the Gospels were transcribed either one from another, or all from common documents; for, if such transcription had been the cause, it would not have produced results so unequal in the different portions into which the Gospels naturally divide themselves.

But, in regard to the words of Jesus, other causes were in operation, that may account for the verbal coincidences among the evangelists, in their reports of what he said. There was, in this case, an invariable archetype, to which each writer would endeavor to conform himself. Events may be correctly related in many forms of language different from each other. Words can be repeated with accuracy only in one form. But each of the first three evangelists intended to give the words of his Master as they were uttered by him. Nor is it to be supposed, that the evangelist, while writing, merely recollected those words as having been formerly uttered by Jesus, and repeated them for the first time. He had often, without doubt, quoted them in his oral discourses, and heard them quoted by his fellow-preachers of Christianity. From the nature of the case, they must, many of them, have become formularies in which the doctrines and precepts of our religion were expressed. The agreement of the first three evangelists, in their reports of the words of Christ, is no greater than these considerations would lead us to anticipate. There is no ground for any other hypothesis concerning it.

Some of the same considerations will explain also the agreement of the evangelists, so far as it exists, in their reports of the words spoken by others beside their Master, particularly such as were connected with his own, as leading to some reply or remark from him.

There is another case in which the first three evangelists repeat the words of others. It is in their quotations from the Old Testa-

ment. These are commonly derived from the Septuagint version, without direct reference to the Hebrew text. Those which they have in common all appear to have been taken from that version; whether they are found in our Greek translation of St. Matthew's Gospel, or in the Greek originals of Mark and Luke. Now, as far as the evangelists verbally agree at once with the Septuagint and each other, or as far as they verbally differ from each other in their quotations, no explanation is required as regards our present purpose. Neither circumstance can prove a connection among them of any kind. But there are several instances in which either two or all three of the evangelists agree with each other, and at the same time differ from our present copies of the Septuagint. In regard to this fact, it is to be observed, that the text of the Septuagint has, from various causes, undergone very considerable changes; and we cannot conclude, that, because a reading is not found in any of our present copies, it was not extant in copies in the time of the evangelists.\* If there be cases, as I believe there are, in which two or all of the evangelists agree in a reading, not only varying from the text of our present copies, but from that of the copies commonly used by them, these cases may be explained by the supposition, that the passage, having been frequently used in the oral discourses of the apostles and their companions, had undergone a change of its original form. This change may have been accidental, as verbal accuracy was often neglected in such quotations; or it

\* This remark may be illustrated by the different readings of two of our present copies in a passage (Zech xiii 7), which Matthew (xxvi. 31) and Mark (xiv. 27) agree verbally in quoting, except that two words are added by Matthew. As given by them, it is as follows: Πατάξω τὸν ποιμένα, καὶ διασκορπισθήσεται τὰ πρόβατα (Matthew adds, τῆς ποίμνης). The reading of this passage in the Vatican text of the Septuagint is, Πατάξετε τοὺς ποιμένας, καὶ ἐσκοπίσατε τὰ πρόβατα. Here seems a great variation in the evangelists; but the Alexandrine text of the Septuagint has these words: Πάταξον τὸν ποιμένα, καὶ διασκορπισθήσονται τὰ πρόβατα τῆς ποίμνης. Such differences of reading existing in our present copies of the Septuagint, it is not improbable that the copies extant in the age of the evangelists had still different readings, to which the quotations in the Gospels may have been conformed in some of the examples of verbal coincidence with each other in which they differ from all existing manuscripts of the Septuagint.

may have been made intentionally, as there sometimes appear to be reasons for it. In either case, it would be the form of words with which the evangelists were most familiar.

The preceding remarks respecting the recital of the language of others by the first three evangelists will hereafter receive further illustration. I make them in this place, that they may be kept in view during our examination of those hypotheses, according to which the verbal coincidences and other correspondences among the first three evangelists are the result of their having copied either one from another, or all from common documents. No argument for either supposition can, I think, be founded upon their agreement in their reports or citations of the words of others. In this portion of their Gospels, the amount of verbal coincidence is not greater than what the causes suggested might lead us to expect.

There is another consideration to be attended to, respecting the verbal correspondence of the first three Gospels. Whether we take the term in a stricter or looser sense, as denoting either sameness, or great resemblance, or equivalence of language, this correspondence does not lie together in masses. With rare exceptions, it does not extend unbroken through passages of any considerable length. It is in fragments, scattered here and there, and interrupted by a dissimilitude of ideas and language, running through far the greater part of each Gospel. As an example of this intermixture in a particular passage, we may take the account of the cure of the paralytic at Capernaum. As the verbal correspondence of the evangelists may be made as apparent in our own language as in the original, I shall in this, and in other similar cases, give the passages quoted in a translation. The *diversity* of expression cannot always be equally well represented: but this is unimportant as regards our purpose.

MATT. ix. 1-8.

And, going on board the boat, he passed over and came to his own city

MARK ii. 1-12.

And again, after some days, he entered Capernaum; and the news spread that he was in his house there And immediately many were

LUKE v 17-26.

And it happened one day, that he was teaching; and there were sitting by Pharisees and teachers of the Law, who had come from

**MATT. ix. 1-8.**

And lo! they brought to him a paralytic, laid on a bed.

And Jesus, perceiving their faith, said to the paralytic, Take courage, son: thy sins are forgiven thee.

And, behold! some of the teachers of the Law said within themselves, This man blasphemes.

And Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, Why are ye thinking evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven, or to say, Rise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man has authority on

**MARK ii. 1-12.**

collected, so that there was no room for them even before the door; and he taught them his doctrine.

And they came to him bringing a paralytic, borne by four men. And, not being able to get near him on account of the crowd, they removed a part of the awning over where he was, and, breaking through, let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

And Jesus, perceiving their faith, said to the paralytic, Son, thy sins are forgiven.

But there were some of the teachers of the Law sitting there, who said in their hearts, How is it that this man speaks such blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, except one, God?

But Jesus, immediately knowing in his mind that they thus thought within them, said to them, Why think ye thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, Thy sins are forgiven, or to say,

**LUKE v. 17-26.**

every town of Galilee and Judæa, and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was displayed in the healing of the sick.

And lo! some persons brought on a bed a man who was a paralytic, and were desirous to carry him in and lay him before Jesus. And not finding any way to carry him in, on account of the crowd, they got on the house-top, and lowered him down from the roof, with his bed, into the midst before Jesus.

And perceiving their faith, he said, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

And the teachers of the Law, and the Pharisees, began to say in their hearts, Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins except God alone?

But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said to them, What are ye thinking in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven, or to say, Rise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man has authority on earth



## MATT. ix. 1-8.

earth to forgive sins, — then he says to the paralytic, Rise, take up thy bed,\* and go to thy house.

And he rose up,

and went to his house.

And the multitude who were looking on were struck with astonishment, and glorified God, who had given such power to men.

## MARK ii. 1-12.

Rise, take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins, — he says to the paralytic, I say to thee, Rise, take up thy bed,\* and go to thy house.

And he rose up immediately, and, taking up his bed, he went out before them all;

so that they were all full of amazement, and glorified God, saying, We never saw the like.

## LUKE v 17-26.

to forgive sins, — he said to the paralytic, I say to thee, Rise, and, taking up thy bed,\* go to thy house.

And directly rising up before them, and taking up what he was lying upon, he went to his house glorifying God

And amazement seized upon all; and they glorified God, and were filled with awe, saying, We have seen wonderful things to-day.

Thus, in other passages, in which there is a verbal correspondence among the evangelists, it sometimes amounts to identity of language, though very rarely through a whole sentence, where they narrate in their own persons; sometimes it presents various shades of resemblance, but, in either case, is almost always broken into short portions, and separated by matter in which the evangelists diverge from each other; sometimes into real or apparent discrepancies. It is evident, therefore, that no theory to account for the agreement of the first three Gospels, one with another, can be satisfactory, unless it afford, likewise, an explanation of their want of agreement, or, in other words, of the peculiar circumstances under which their correspondences present themselves.

We will now turn to another fact which requires our attention, in reference to the agreement and disagreement of the first three

\* The three evangelists use three different terms for bed, — Matthew, κλίνη; Mark, κράββατος; and Luke, κλινίδιον.

Gospels. It is, that, in the order of events *related in common by the three evangelists*, Mark and Luke differ from Matthew, and coincide with each other, particularly in three remarkable instances.

In the first of them, Matthew (viii. 1-4) represents the cure of a leper as having been performed by Christ previously to his being in Capernaum on the sabbath, as related in the eighth chapter of his Gospel; while Mark and Luke represent what is obviously the same cure as having been performed by Christ after leaving the city.\*

Another discrepancy, which is more extraordinary, is as follows. According to Matthew, Jesus, in the evening (as appears) of the sabbath (Saturday) just mentioned, which he spent at Capernaum, left the city, crossed the Lake of Galilee in a boat with his disciples, miraculously stilled a tempest which befell them on their course, arrived in the country of the Gadarenes, and there restored sanity to two demoniacs, returned immediately after to Capernaum, and on Monday (as appears) cured a person afflicted with palsy, called Matthew to be a disciple, was present at an entertainment (in Matthew's house, as we learn from Luke), justified his disciples for not fasting, healed a woman with an issue of blood, and restored the daughter of Jairus to life.† On the other hand, Mark and Luke represent the voyage across the Lake of Galilee, and the events of the two days following, — excepting the cure of the paralytic, the call of Matthew, and the entertainment at his house, with the conversation about fasting connected with it,‡ — as having taken place at a later period of Christ's ministry, after the discourse in which he delivered a number of parables near the shore by Capernaum. § No reason can be assigned why Matthew should not have related all the events mentioned in their proper order. As an apostle, he had the best means of becoming acquainted with the time and place of different transactions. Mark and Luke, on the other hand, were not apostles; and in Luke's Gospel there are, beside the present, many clear indications that he had but an imperfect

\* Mark i. 40-45. Luke v. 12-15                      † Matt. viii. 16—ix. 26.

‡ To these events they may be considered as assigning the same period with St. Matthew, though with less definiteness. See Mark ii. 1-22; Luke v. 17-39.

§ Mark iv. 35—v. 43. Luke viii. 22-56.

knowledge of the succession of events, and was often uninformed of the particular place where they occurred.\*

There is, further, what seems a decisive reason for believing

\* Thus, the cure of the leper, mentioned above, is represented by Matthew (viii. 1-5) as having been performed just before our Saviour entered Capernaum; but the indefiniteness of Luke's information respecting the place of its performance appears in the manner in which he introduces the account (v. 12),—"And when he was in *a certain city*, behold! a man full of leprosy." The cure of the paralytic, likewise mentioned above, we learn both from Matthew (ix. 1) and Mark (ii. 1) was wrought at Capernaum; while Luke (v. 16, 17), after saying, that Jesus withdrew to solitary places to pray, immediately proceeds, without note of time or place, to introduce the narrative thus: "And it happened one day." So the voyage across the Lake of Galilee to the country of the Gadarenes is related by Matthew (viii. 16, 18) as having commenced on the evening of the sabbath when Jesus first publicly appeared at Capernaum, and by Mark (iv. 35) is referred (I suppose erroneously) to the evening of the day when Jesus preached in parables; but Luke (viii. 22) again commences this narrative in the same manner as the last mentioned,— "And it happened one day."

The want of chronological order in Luke's Gospel is a point of some importance. It is evident, I think, in the case remarked upon in the text; but it may be worth while to add a few more instances.

I. Matthew (iv. 18-20) and Mark (i. 16-18) relate, that Peter was called to be a disciple before the public appearance of Jesus at Capernaum; and that Jesus, when at Capernaum, proceeded from the synagogue to Peter's house, where he cured his wife's mother of a fever. Luke, who mentions the last events, represents the call of Peter as taking place subsequently, when Jesus had left Capernaum; and describes Peter as struck with consternation at a miracle then performed by our Saviour (v. 1-11).

II. It is, I think, likewise evident, that Luke confounded the discourse called the Sermon on the Mount, which Jesus, as related by Matthew, delivered before his public appearance in Capernaum, with that which he addressed to his apostles immediately after their appointment (Matt. chap. x.). Luke (vi. 12-49) represents our Saviour upon this occasion, not as giving to his newly appointed apostles the appropriate directions referring to their peculiar duties, which according to Matthew, himself an apostle, he actually did, but as delivering the Sermon on the Mount; at the close of which he relates, that Jesus entered Capernaum, and cured the servant of a centurion. To the last events, Matthew assigns the same relative order in reference to the Sermon on the Mount. By Luke, the whole appears to have been introduced out of its proper place.

III. Passing over other examples, of less importance, or which cannot be explained in so few words. I will adduce but one more.

that Matthew has not misplaced the particular events in question. According to his narrative, it appears that they all took place during three days, on the last of which he was called to be a

In the ninth chapter of his Gospel (ver. 51, 52), Luke says, "But, when the time was near for his being received into heaven, he set his face steadily to go to Jerusalem; and sent messengers before him, who went into a village of Samaritans to prepare for him." The journey, the commencement of which is here mentioned, probably occurred some months before our Saviour's crucifixion. It was, as I suppose, when he was going up to the Feast of Tabernacles, mentioned in the seventh chapter of John's Gospel. But the language of Luke implies that it was his last journey to Jerusalem, and is therefore inconsistent with the supposition of any subsequent return to Galilee. In the tenth chapter (ver. 38), we find Jesus arrived at Bethany (*a certain town*, Luke says, without giving the name), the residence of Martha and Mary, a short distance only from Jerusalem. But, in the eleventh chapter (ver. 14-23), Luke relates the cure of a demoniac, and the reply of Jesus to the charge that he cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub, which, according to both Matthew and Mark, occurred in Galilee. In the thirteenth chapter (ver. 22), we are told, that Jesus "went through the cities and villages, teaching, on his way to Jerusalem;" but, in the same chapter (ver. 31, 32), we find him still in the dominions of Herod, probably in Peræa; for the Pharisees are represented as telling him, for the purpose of inducing him to leave the country, that Herod, its ruler, was desirous of destroying him; while again, in the seventeenth chapter (ver. 11), Luke speaks of him as on his way to Jerusalem, "passing along the confines of Samaria and Galilee," which implies that he was journeying from Galilee.

Throughout far the greater part of Luke's Gospel, and in regard to all but a few leading events in Christ's history, there seems to me a want of chronological order.

I may here add, that it is far from being the fact, as might be supposed from some of the statements on the subject, that, where Mark or Luke differ from the arrangement of Matthew in the matter common to all three, they uniformly agree with each other. Two examples to the contrary have been given in this note: one, in the call of Peter; and the other, in the reply of Jesus to the charge, that he cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub (Matt. xii. 22-37; Mark iii. 11, 23-30; Luke xi. 14-23). In the account, likewise, of the preaching of Jesus at Nazareth (Matt. xiii. 54-58; Mark vi. 1-6; Luke iv. 16-30), and in the account of the attempt of his mother and relations to obtain access to him while he was teaching the people (Matt. xii. 46-50; Mark iii. 31-35; Luke viii. 19-21), Luke differs from the arrangement of Matthew, while Mark coincides with it. The only important instances of the agreement of Mark and Luke, in deviating from the order of Matthew, are mentioned in the text.

disciple. The miraculous cure of Jairus's daughter he relates as immediately following the entertainment at his own house. But it is impossible that his memory should have deceived him respecting the time when such events occurred; and that he should have imagined them to have been in so close connection with the most important incident in his own life, if they had not taken place till a later period of Christ's ministry. The agreement, therefore, between Mark and Luke cannot be explained by the supposition, that they observed the order of time, and that Matthew did not; nor can it well be regarded as a mere accident, consequent solely upon their both being ignorant of the real succession of events.

Beside the two already mentioned, there is another instance in which Mark and Luke differ in common from the order of Matthew. They place the accounts of his disciples passing through a field of grain on the sabbath, and of his curing on the sabbath, in a synagogue, a man with a withered hand, before the appointment of the apostles; while Matthew refers both events to a subsequent period.

Among the phenomena of agreement and disagreement in the Gospels, the consent of Mark and Luke in differing from the arrangement of Matthew is, perhaps, most difficult of explanation; but it may serve as a test of the probability of some of the hypotheses which have been formed to account for those phenomena.

As regards any hypothesis intended for this purpose, beside accounting for those phenomena, there are other conditions which it must fulfil. It must be consistent with the historical facts relating to the early history of the Gospels, and with the intrinsic probabilities respecting their composition. It must correspond to the habits of the age, and particularly to those of the Jews of Palestine. If we regard the Gospels as genuine, it must accord with the character and circumstances of the first three evangelists, and, in any case, with the general character of the works themselves. It must explain the phenomena, which constitute the problem to be solved, consistently with all the other phenomena which the Gospels present. These works, for instance, show that their authors, whoever they were, had no habits of literary compo-

sition, that they were unaccustomed to commit events to writing; and whatever supposition we may make should be consistent with this obvious fact. And, lastly, any hypothesis, to be admissible, must assign a reasonable motive for what it represents the authors of the Gospels to have done; or, to express the same thing in other words, must not represent them as acting in a manner unreasonable and unaccountable.

In treating of the hypotheses to be examined, I shall use language conformed to the belief of the genuineness of the Gospels. I have already endeavored to show, that no hypothesis for explaining their correspondences is tenable upon a contrary supposition; \* nor has it been common to maintain any such hypothesis in connection with an explicit denial of their genuineness. I, however, adopt the language in question, principally for the sake of convenience and perspicuity, — to avoid that embarrassment and diffuseness of expression which would arise from an attempt to present the problem to be solved, in its most general and indefinite form. Many, though not all, of the arguments I shall adduce respecting the first two hypotheses examined are equally applicable, whoever may be considered as the authors of the Gospels; so that they would lose none of their force, if the names of those authors were denoted by algebraic symbols, carrying no associations with them. The hypothesis I shall defend supposes that the Gospels have been ascribed to their true authors; and, if it afford the only satisfactory solution of their correspondences, must afford, at the time, additional proof of that fact. But I do not, it is to be observed, found the present inquiry upon the conclusion which I have before endeavored to establish, that no hypothesis can explain the correspondence of the Gospels, except upon the supposition that they were written in the apostolic age, or, what is equivalent, the supposition of their genuineness: on the contrary, I trust that this conclusion will receive new confirmation from what follows.

With these views of the nature of the facts to be explained, of the conditions required in their explanation, and of the form in

\* See before, p. 93, seqq.

which the inquiry may most conveniently be pursued, we will now proceed to consider the different theories that have been proposed to account for the agreement of the first three Gospels.

## SECTION II.

*On the Supposition that Two of the Evangelists copied, One from his Predecessor, and the Other from Both his Predecessors.*

The most obvious solution of the phenomenon in question, which has formerly been very generally adopted, is that the evangelists copied one from another. In maintaining this hypothesis, we must suppose that the latest copied from the two preceding, and the second in order of time from his predecessor; since there are agreements between any two of the three Gospels for which it will not otherwise account. To determine whether this hypothesis be tenable, we will consider a particular form of it, which is as plausible as any other. It is the supposition, that Luke copied from Matthew, and Mark from both Matthew and Luke.

I. Now the first consideration is, that, when we ascribe to an individual an action of which we have no direct proof, we must assign some probable motive for the action; and there appears no reasonable inducement for Mark to have formed such a Gospel as his own from those of Matthew and Luke. He could not have so deceived himself as to suppose, that he was writing what, to any class of men, would be a more valuable history of Christ than either of theirs. He could not suppose, that it would supply the place, or supersede the use, of either. He could not have written his Gospel for the sake of the small additions which he has made of original matter; for they are so small in amount as to render the supposition incredible. Had it been his object to give supplementary matter, he might, without doubt, have collected much more; and, with this purpose, he would not, as he has done, have repeated passages which, if he copied, he has only abridged.

It may perhaps be suggested, that he intended to make a Gospel which, being more brief than the other two, might be transcribed at less expense, and read in a shorter time; and which would therefore circulate more widely. But this notion, derived

from the booksellers' trade of modern days, is not to be transferred to the times of the ancient Christians. Among their other sacrifices, they would not have reckoned that of a few denarii, if given as the extra cost of a more complete Gospel; nor would they have been unwilling to spare the additional half-hour required for its reading.

II. If we suppose Mark and Luke to have copied from Matthew, there are discrepancies between them and Matthew for which we cannot account. The simple fact, indeed, that there are discrepancies between two evangelists, does not prove that one may not have copied the other; for the later writer may have intended to correct the mistakes of his predecessor. But the discrepancies may be of such a kind as to render this supposition improbable or incredible. Thus, Matthew relates, that two demoniacs among the Gadarenes were restored to sanity by Jesus, and that he gave sight to two blind men near Jericho; while Mark and Luke, in each case, mention only one. The difference is of no importance, considering them all as independent historians; but it is highly improbable, that Matthew would have spoken of two, if there had been only one, or that Mark and Luke would have varied from his account in this particular, had they been acquainted with it. In the narrative of another fact, the withering of the barren fig-tree, Matthew represents it as the immediate consequence of the words of Jesus, as taking place as soon as they were uttered; and the astonishment and awe felt by the disciples appear in his account as expressed at the moment: "And the disciples, seeing it, were struck with awe, and said, How suddenly this fig-tree has withered!"\* It may seem, at first view, difficult to account for the emotion of the disciples, after all the other astonishing miracles which they had witnessed. But we may understand it, when we consider the striking visible phenomenon presented, so different from any which Jesus had before effected, its startling suddenness, and the peculiar character of the miracle, unlike his former works of mercy, a symbolical act, a visible parable, as it were, intended to indicate the punishment about to fall upon the great body of the Jews, to whom Jesus had "come seeking fruit, and had found

\* See Matt. xxi. 18, seqq.



none."\* The account of Matthew is consistent and probable. But Mark † represents the words of our Saviour as having been uttered on one morning, and the effect of them upon the fig-tree as having been first observed by his disciples the following morning; when Peter "*remembered*, and said to him, Master, behold! this fig-tree which thou didst curse has withered." That the disciples remarked upon the event, not only when it occurred, but also as they were passing the tree the following morning, is not improbable; and it may have been on the following morning, likewise, and not immediately after the occurrence of the event, that our Saviour announced to them those miraculous powers, which, if they had faith, would be granted to them, as recorded both by Matthew and Mark. We may thus account for the manner in which Mark has represented the transaction. But there can be little doubt, that the astonishment of the disciples was expressed directly after the occurrence of the miracle; nor can we suppose, that Mark, with the account of Matthew before him, would have given such a one as appears in his Gospel.

The differences of narration, of which these are specimens, afford proof, that neither Mark nor Luke copied from Matthew. But the most striking discrepancies between the evangelists regard the chronological order of events. The voyage, before mentioned, across the Lake of Galilee to the country of the Gadarenes, with certain facts connected with and following it, is, as we have seen, clearly referred by Matthew to a particular period of Christ's ministry; nor can there, I think, be a reasonable doubt, that he has assigned to those events their true place.‡ On the contrary, Mark explicitly and circumstantially states them as having occurred at a different time. After relating that Jesus taught by the sea-side in parables, he proceeds: "And the same day, in the evening, he said to his disciples, Let us cross to the other side;" § and then follows an account of the voyage. Now, if Matthew's order be correct, as we believe, Mark could have no good reason for differing from it; nor would he have differed from it, had he,

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\* See the parable of the barren fig-tree (Luke xiii. 6-9), which is to be considered as explanatory of this miracle.

† Chap. xi. 12-14, 20, seqq.

‡ See before, p. 471, seqq.

§ Mark iv. 35.

as has been supposed, taken Matthew's Gospel as his main guide in the composition of his own.

Similar reasoning is equally conclusive against the supposition, that Luke transcribed from Matthew's Gospel. Being evidently unacquainted with the chronological order of many events, and the place of their occurrence, if he had borrowed any assistance from Matthew, he would have taken him for a guide in those respects.

III. Mark's Gospel, though but about three-fifths of the size of either of the other two Gospels, has in no other respect the character of an abridgment or a selection from them. On the supposition, that he formed his Gospel out of the other two, there is no principle of selection which can reasonably be ascribed to him. A characteristic distinction between Mark and the other two evangelists is, that he gives comparatively but few of the declarations and precepts of Jesus, and his Gospel is more a simple narrative of actions and events. Now, this may be explained, if we suppose Mark to have written his Gospel with a limited view, for the use of individuals already instructed in Christianity, on whose minds the words of Christ had been deeply impressed by oral teaching, and to whom, therefore, only the framework of his history was necessary in order to enable them to define and arrange their recollections; but, if we believe Mark to have been familiar with the other two Gospels, we cannot imagine him to have believed another history necessary for such a purpose. He must have written his own with a view more prospective; and, this being supposed, it is not credible that he should have thought it advisable to omit a large portion of the words of our Saviour, and many striking incidents in his life, which, being in the books before him, it would have cost him only the labor of transcription to preserve in his own. As I have said, no rational principle of selection can be assigned to account for what he has taken, and what he has omitted. Should it be said, that he thought the other Gospels would go down to posterity together with his own, the question recurs, What was his purpose in writing? Why did he undertake this labor, evidently foreign from his habits of mind?

IV. Let us view the subject under another aspect. To the accounts which Mark gives in common with the other evangelists, he often adds particular circumstances not narrated by them. But he who is acquainted with the minor particulars of an event is, of course, well acquainted with its principal features. Now, the knowledge of those particulars which he has added not being derived by him from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, it follows that he was not dependent upon those Gospels for a knowledge of the main fact itself. Sometimes Mark varies in his accounts from one or both of the other evangelists. There is a discrepancy between them. If he used their Gospels, he would thus have varied from them only for the purpose of giving what he believed a more accurate account than they had done. In all such cases as have been mentioned, it is clear that Mark, believing himself to be fully and correctly possessed of the facts, might have written as he has done without any knowledge of the other two evangelists. When, with the differences that have been mentioned, there is a striking difference of language likewise, it becomes apparent, that Mark, in such passages, made no use of his supposed predecessors. Of passages of this kind, I will give one as an example, placing in parallel columns an English version of the text of the three evangelists, as their difference of language may be sufficiently represented in a translation. The passage is an account of the curing of the demoniac boy, immediately after our Saviour's transfiguration.

MATT. xvii. 14-21.

And, when they came to the multitude,

MARK ix. 14-29.

And, when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the teachers of the Law disputing with them. And immediately the whole multitude, upon seeing him, was struck with awe, and, running towards him, saluted him. And he asked them, What are ye disputing about together?

LUKE ix. 37-43.

And, on the following day, as they were descending the mountain, a great multitude met him.

MATT. xvii. 14-21.

a man met him; and, falling on his knees before him, said, Master, have pity on my son, for he is a lunatic, and suffers grievously; for he often falls into the fire, and often into the water;

and I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not heal him. Then Jesus said, Unbelieving and perverse race! how long shall I be with you? how long must I bear with you? Bring him hither to me.

MARK ix. 14-29.

And one of the multitude answered, Teacher, I brought my son to thee, who has a dumb spirit; and, when it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams at his mouth, and gnashes his teeth, and becomes insensible; \*

and I spoke to thy disciples to cast it out, and they were not able. Then Jesus said to them, Unbelieving race! how long shall I be with you? how long must I bear with you? Bring him to me.

And they brought him to him; and, as soon as he saw Jesus, the spirit convulsed him; and, falling down, he rolled upon the ground, foaming at his mouth. And Jesus questioned his father, How long has it been thus with him? And he answered, From a child. And often it casts him into the fire and into water, to destroy him. But, if thou canst do any thing, have pity upon us, and

LUKE ix. 37-43.

And, behold! a man from the multitude cried out, saying, Teacher, I beseech thee to look upon my son; for he is my only child; and, behold! a spirit seizes him, and utters a sudden cry, and convulses him so that he foams at his mouth, and hardly departs from him, leaving him utterly exhausted; and I besought thy disciples to cast it out, and they could not. Then Jesus said, Unbelieving and perverse race! how long shall I be with you, and bear with you? Lead thy son hither.

And, while he was coming, the demon threw him down, and convulsed him.

\* Καὶ ξηπαίρνει. It is impossible to determine in what sense Mark uses this term. Perhaps it should be rendered, "and is wasting away."

MATT. xvii. 14-21.

And Jesus rebuked the demon, so that it came out of him; and the boy was well from that hour.

Then the disciples came to Jesus apart, and said, Why could we not cast it out? And Jesus said to them, Through your want of faith; for I tell you in truth, had ye faith as a grain of mustard-seed, should you say to this mountain, Remove from this place to that, it would remove; and

MARK ix. 14-29.

help us. Then Jesus said to him, What means this, 'If thou canst'? All things may be done for him who has faith. And immediately the father of the child, crying out with tears, said, I have faith: help thou my want of faith. Then Jesus, seeing that the multitude was running together to the spot, rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him, and enter him no more. And uttering a cry, and convulsing him much, it came out of him. And he was as if dead, so that many said, He is dead; but Jesus, taking him by the hand, raised him, and he stood up.

And, after he had entered a house, his disciples asked him, privately, Why could we not cast it out? And he said to them,

LUKE ix. 37-43.

But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him to his father.

And all were astonished at this display of the power of God.

MATT. xvii. 14-21.

MARK ix. 14-29.

LUKE ix. 37-43.

nothing would be impossible to you. But it is only through prayer and fasting that this race may be expelled.

By nothing but prayer and fasting can this race be cast out.

In this passage, as in others, it is clear, not merely that Mark did not copy Matthew or Luke, but that no one of the evangelists copied either of the other two. This is not a matter of argument: it is only the statement of a fact apparent on inspection.

V. But it may be said, that no one supposes that Mark derived his knowledge of the events in Christ's ministry solely from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke; on the contrary, as a preacher of Christianity, he must have been well acquainted with them from other sources. Nor is it maintained, that he transcribed from one or the other in every case where he relates the same events. But what is contended for is, that he made use of their Gospels, particularly that of Matthew, in composing his own; and that this supposition is proved by the remarkable correspondences between his Gospel and each of the other two, in various passages. These resemblances, it may be urged, are so great as to render it highly probable that one evangelist copied from another.

In this reasoning, it is supposed that one evangelist copied from another, because the resemblance between them is so great. I answer, that very few instances can be pointed out, in which this supposition does not require a much greater resemblance than exists; and that most of the passages in which it is found, instead of rendering it probable that one evangelist transcribed from another, afford strong reasons for an opposite conclusion. I will quote, for example, the account of the call of Matthew, the entertainment in his house, and the conversation occasioned by it, as given by the three evangelists.

MATT. ix. 9-17.

MARK ii. 14-22.

LUKE v. 27-39.

(Ver. 9.) And Jesus, as he was passing thence, saw a man, called Matthew, sitting

(Ver. 14.) And, as he was passing along, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting to re-

(Ver. 27.) And, after this, Jesus went out, and saw a tax-gatherer, by the name of Levi,

## MATT. ix. 9-17.

to receive the customs; and said to him, Come with me And he arose, and went with him.

(Ver 10.) And while Jesus was at table in his house, lo! many tax-gatherers and sinners, who had come, were at table with Jesus and his disciples.

(Ver. 11.) And the Pharisees, seeing this, said to his disciples, Why does your teacher eat with these tax-gatherers and sinners?

(Ver. 12.) But Jesus, hearing this, said to them, The well need not a physician, but the sick.

(Ver. 13 ) But go ye, and learn what this means, *I desire goodness and not sacrifices*. For I did not come to give an invitation to righteous men, but to sinners.

(Ver. 14.) Then the disciples of John came to him, and said, Why, when we and the Pharisees fast often,

## MARK ii. 14-22.

ceive the customs; and said to him, Come with me And he arose, and went with him.

(Ver. 15.) And while Jesus was at table in his house, many tax-gatherers and sinners also were at table with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many who had followed him.

(Ver. 16.) And the teachers of the Law, and the Pharisees, seeing him eating with the tax-gatherers and sinners, said to his disciples, How is it that he is eating and drinking with these tax-gatherers and sinners?

(Ver. 17.) And Jesus, hearing this, said to them, The well need not a physician, but the sick.

I did not come to give an invitation to righteous men, but to sinners

(Ver. 18.) And the disciples of John and the Pharisees were keeping a fast; and they came and said to him, Why, when the disciples of John and those of the Pharisees

## LUKE v. 27-39.

sitting to receive the customs; and said to him, Come with me

(Ver. 28 ) And, leaving every thing, he arose and went with him

(Ver 29 ) And Levi made a great entertainment for him in his house; and there was a great number of tax-gatherers and others, who were at table with them.

(Ver. 30 ) But their teachers of the Law, and the Pharisees, murmured at this, saying to his disciples, Why are ye eating and drinking with these tax-gatherers and sinners?

(Ver. 31.) And Jesus, answering, said to them, They who are in health need not a physician, but the sick.

(Ver. 32.) I have not come to call righteous men, but sinners, to reformation.

(Ver. 33.) But they

said to him, Why, when the disciples of John are continually fasting and making supplications,

MATT. ix. 9-17.

do not thy disciples fast?

(Ver. 15.) And Jesus said to them, Can the companions of the bridegroom mourn, so long as the bridegroom is with them?

But the days are coming when the bridegroom will be taken from them; and then will they fast.

(Ver. 16.) No one puts a patch of undressed cloth upon an old garment; for the piece would tear away from the garment, and a worse rent be made.

(Ver. 17.) Nor do men put new wine into old skins; for the skins would burst, and the wine run to waste, and the skins would be spoilt. But they put new wine into new skins, so that both may be preserved.

MARK ii. 14-22.

are fasting, do not thy disciples fast?

(Ver. 19.) And Jesus said to them, Can the companions of the bridegroom fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

(Ver. 20.) But the days are coming when the bridegroom will be taken from them; and then will they fast in that day.

(Ver. 21.) No one sews a patch of undressed cloth upon an old garment; otherwise the new piece would tear away from the old garment, and a worse rent be made.

(Ver. 22.) And no one puts new wine into old skins; for the new wine would burst the skins, and the wine would run to waste, and the skins would be spoilt. But new wine must be put into new skins.

LUKE v. 27-39.

and likewise those of the Pharisees, are thine eating and drinking?

(Ver. 34.) But he said to them, Can ye make the companions of the bridegroom fast, while the bridegroom is with them?

(Ver. 35.) But the days are coming when the bridegroom will be taken from them: then will they fast in those days.

(Ver. 36.) Then he spake a parable to them: No one takes a patch from a new garment to put upon an old garment; otherwise the new garment would be cut, and the patch from the new would not match with the old.

(Ver. 37.) And no one puts new wine into old skins; for the new wine would burst the skins, and it would run to waste, and the skins would be spoilt.

(Ver. 38.) But new wine must be put into new skins, so that both may be preserved.

(Ver. 39.) And no one, after drinking old wine, immediately wishes for new; for he says, The old is better.



The preceding is a specimen of the accordance of meaning and language which is found among the first three Gospels. It is elsewhere mixed with similar diversities. But a comparison of such parallel passages from the different evangelists shows, I think, that no one of them copied from either of the others.

As in the example given, so generally in other cases of parallelism among the first three Gospels, variations of expression, omissions, and additions occur, which are not to be accounted for on the theory, that the evangelists copied one from another; because they are such as cannot be ascribed to accident, and, at the same time, such as would not have been made by design. Thus, in the specimen given, if either Mark or Luke had been copying from Matthew, it is unlikely that he would have substituted the name of Levi, by which that evangelist appears to have been known before his becoming a disciple, for the name of Matthew, by which he was commonly called afterwards, and which he himself had used in this place; or that Luke, if he had Mark before him, and had preferred the name of Levi, would have omitted the further designation, "the son of Alphaeus." Mark, if he had been following Luke, would have retained the explicit statement of the latter, that the entertainment, at which our Lord was present, was made by Matthew; and, with Matthew for his guide, he would not have changed the clear and simple expressions used by him in the tenth and eleventh verses for his own more diffuse, and, in the original, more obscure language. Luke, it is evident, was, in the corresponding verses, neither the original nor the copyist of either. The question of the Pharisees respecting Christ's eating with tax-gatherers and sinners is given in different terms by each of the evangelists; yet, if any one of them copied from either of the others, it does not appear what motive could have induced him to change its form. Similar remarks may be made respecting the other variations of language among the evangelists, which occur in this passage. But there are differences of another kind. The first clause of the thirteenth verse of Matthew seems to me essential to a full understanding of the meaning of Jesus.\* But,

\* The words of Matthew are these: "But Jesus, hearing this, said to them, The well need not a physician, but the sick. *But go ye, and learn what this means, 'I desire goodness, and not sacrifices.'* For I did not come to give

whether it be so or not, neither Mark nor Luke, had they been borrowing from Matthew, would have omitted it as they have done, copying, at the same time, the words which precede and follow. In the next verse (the eighteenth) of Mark, he states explicitly, that the disciples of John and the Pharisees were keeping a fast, which is not done by the other evangelists.\* It is a circumstance which throws a strong light upon their state of feeling when seeing Jesus at the same time present at an entertainment with tax-gatherers and sinners. The fact does not appear in the account of the other evangelists. But it is not probable, that, if either Matthew or Luke had been transcribing from Mark's Gospel, he would have omitted this circumstance by design, or passed over it by accident. At the end of the fifteenth verse of Matthew, neither Mark nor Luke, if copying his text, would have thought it necessary to add the superfluous words, "in that day," or "in those days." Luke, in the thirty-sixth verse, borrowed from neither Matthew nor Mark, and neither borrowed from him. And, with Luke's Gospel before them, there is no likelihood that either Matthew or Mark would have omitted the concluding words

an invitation to righteous men, but to sinners." The words in italics are omitted by the other evangelists. But our Saviour's answer, as given by Matthew, is, I conceive, to be thus understood:—You reproach me for being with tax-gatherers and sinners: it is fitting I should be; the well need not a physician, but the sick. But do not think that you are less morally diseased than those whom you despise. You, no more than they, perform what God requires: while you insist on ceremonies and superstitious observances, you neglect what is essential in religion and morality. Go ye, and learn what this means, *I desire goodness, and not sacrifices*. I came to give an invitation to all to accept God's mercy; and as regards you, as well as them, I did not come to give an invitation to righteous men, but to sinners.

\* It appears from the Talmud, that the more religious Jews fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. Thus the Pharisee mentioned in Luke xviii. 12 is represented by our Saviour as saying, "I fast twice a week." Now we have before inferred, from the account of Matthew (see p. 470), that the entertainment at Matthew's house took place on Monday. This accords with Mark's account, that the disciples of John and the Pharisees *were keeping a fast* (ἦσαν νηστεύοντες). This coincidence between the Gospels, to be ascertained only by what we learn from the Talmud, deserves remark, as one among many facts of a similar kind which serve to establish their authenticity.

of Jesus, as given by Luke (ver. 39), which accord so well with the context.

In order fully to estimate the force of the preceding remarks, we must recollect, that no copyist, writing in the same style with his original, would designedly change the ideas or expressions of the latter, except for the sake of some real or fancied improvement; unless, indeed, his purpose were to conceal plagiarism, — a purpose which no one will ascribe to the evangelists. But nothing, that can be supposed a real or fancied improvement, appears in the differences that have been mentioned, or in many others that might be specified in the parallel passages of the first three Gospels. It is particularly improbable, that such changes should have been made by any one of the three evangelists, since the style and vocabulary of all are essentially the same; and, except so far as Luke may form a partial exception, they obviously had little command of language. But for some strong reason, therefore, any one of them would have copied literally the already well-known narrative, which he found before him, except, perhaps, that St. Luke, if he wrote last, might sometimes have retouched the style of his predecessors. Certainly, no one of them would have made an unimportant addition in one place, and omitted an important passage in another; nor so varied his own account as to render it obscure and imperfect, requiring, in order to be fully understood, that the Gospel from which he copied should be consulted as a commentary on his own. Yet, however we may arrange the order of transcription, all this must be supposed in reference to the two evangelists who are represented as transcribers, especially if the two be Mark and Luke.

These observations are applicable to a large portion of the Gospels, but are particularly striking as regards the narrative of the closing scenes of our Saviour's life, his death, his resurrection, and the events subsequent. Such are the omissions and differences from one another in the accounts of the three evangelists, that, considering these alone, I cannot believe that any one of them had seen the work of either of the others. This is a portion of the Gospels which has been too little attended to, either by those who suppose that the evangelists transcribed one from another, or by those who suppose that they transcribed from common documents.

It may appear, then, that, beside the particular objections to any particular form that may be given to the supposition that the evangelists copied one from another, the general objections to it are these: — There is no reasonable principle of selection on which they can be supposed to have proceeded. They were, all of them, as preachers of Christianity, well acquainted with the transactions which it was their purpose to record; their independent knowledge of them appears in the Gospel of each; they had, therefore, no occasion to copy one from another, and it is a fact, obvious simply upon inspection, that far the greater part of each Gospel was not thus copied. And, lastly, their Gospels generally, and even those very passages on which this theory of transcription has been founded, present numerous diversities of such a character as the evangelist, whichever may be supposed the copyist, would not have made, with the text of his predecessor, or predecessors, before him as an archetype.

### SECTION III.

#### *On the Supposition that the First Three Evangelists made Use of Common Written Documents.*

The supposition that the first three evangelists copied one from another has found, comparatively, but few defenders in later times, and has been superseded, in a great degree, by the supposition that they all transcribed from common written documents. This hypothesis we have had occasion to notice in the text of the present work.\* I will state it generally, as explained by Bishop Marsh, who may be considered as having improved upon Eichhorn, from whom he borrowed it. The differences between them are not such as to affect its credibility.

It is supposed, then, that there was an original narrative of the life of Christ, *an original Gospel*,† which contained, in some form or other, all those relations that are common to our first three Gospels. This, it is thought, was receiving continual additions

\* See before, pp. 60. 61.

† I use this term, borrowed from Eichhorn, for the sake of convenience and distinctness of expression. It is not employed by Bishop Marsh.

from its various transcribers, different in different copies. The first three evangelists are supposed each to have used a different copy as the basis of his Gospel. Matthew's copy, beside the original text, contained likewise the additional matter which he has in common with Mark alone, or with Luke alone. Mark's copy differed from this, both in wanting the matter which is common to Matthew and Luke only, and in having additional matter not found in Matthew's copy; namely, that which is common to Mark and Luke only. Luke's copy, in like manner, had certain additions, which are common to him either with Matthew or with Mark, and wanted those passages which are found only in the two last-mentioned evangelists.\*

The Original Gospel, and the three modifications of it just mentioned, were all written in the Syro-Chaldee, or, as it is more popularly termed, the Hebrew language. Matthew's Gospel was originally written in the same language. But Mark and Luke wrote in Greek, and each translated into that language the document which he used as the basis of his Gospel. But the verbal harmony between them in that portion of matter which constituted the Original Gospel, before it had received any additions, is believed to be greater than would result from two independent translations of the same work. In order to account for it, therefore, it is supposed, that the Original Gospel, before any additions had been made to it, was translated into Greek; and that Mark and Luke each had a copy of this Greek translation, from which he occasionally derived assistance in rendering his Hebrew document. Each sometimes adopted its words in the same passage; and in these passages they agree verbally with each other.

But besides the enlarged copy of the Original Gospel, which was in the hands of each of the evangelists, and the Greek translation of this Gospel, used by Mark and Luke, it is further supposed that there was another document, written in Hebrew, which was used only by Matthew and Luke; the former incorporating it into his Gospel in the original language, and the latter

\* Bishop Marsh distinguishes between those additions, common to two of the Gospels, which were made to narratives already extant in the Original Gospel, and those additions which were made of new narratives common to two of the Gospels; but this is a distinction not important to be attended to in reference to our present purpose.

translating it into Greek. This was a collection of precepts, parables, and discourses, which had been delivered by Christ at different times and on different occasions. The name of *Gnomologia* has been given it, with reference to its supposed character. The copies of this document used by Matthew and Luke, though generally agreeing, differed in some respects from each other. It was not arranged with any regard to chronological order. Matthew, being an apostle, is thought to have inserted the different portions of it in different parts of his Gospel; "having regard, probably, to the times and occasions when the sayings of our Saviour were delivered."\* But Luke, who was not present at their delivery, did not undertake to do this. With the exception of only two portions, "both of which have internal notes of time," he inserted in his Gospel the whole collection, as he found it; and it constitutes that portion of matter which extends from chap. ix. ver. 51 to chap. xviii. ver. 14. But by a license which must, I think, be regarded as extraordinary and unjustifiable, "he gave," it is said, "to the whole the form of a narrative, in order to make it correspond with the rest of his Gospel, which was not a collection of unconnected facts, but a continued history."†

In order to explain the verbal harmony between our present Greek Gospel of Matthew and the Gospels of Mark and Luke, it is supposed that the translator of the former derived assistance from the two latter Gospels, and borrowed their language in cases where there is a correspondence of matter between them and that of Matthew.

I will briefly recapitulate the steps in this hypothesis. The first supposition is of an Original Gospel, written in Hebrew, and receiving continual additions from various hands. This is supposed to have been used in three different forms by the first three evangelists, being in one of its forms the basis of the work of each. Besides this document, it is supposed that there was another, a miscellaneous collection of discourses and sayings of

\* Marsh's Dissertation, in the second part of the third volume of his Translation of Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament, p. 401

† Ibid., p. 402.

Jesus, likewise written in Hebrew, which was used only by Matthew and Luke. Thus, *the general correspondence of matter and language* among all three evangelists, and between any two of the evangelists in portions peculiar to them, is thought to be accounted for. The *verbal coincidences* between Mark and Luke are explained by the supposition, that they both used a Greek translation of the Original Gospel, made before that work had received any additions; and the verbal coincidences between our present Greek Gospel of Matthew and the other two Gospels, by the supposition, that his translator used their Gospels in rendering into Greek the Hebrew original of Matthew.

In maintaining this hypothesis, the genuineness of the Gospels is asserted by Bishop Marsh; and its other defenders have not attempted to free it from the peculiar objections, formerly stated,\* to which it is liable, if their genuineness be denied. I shall therefore offer some arguments in which their genuineness is supposed. But I think it will be perceived, that, distinct from these, there are intrinsic and insuperable objections to the hypothesis, both from the positions it involves, and from its being founded on an erroneous and imperfect view of the phenomena of the Gospels, so that it neither explains nor is consistent with those phenomena. What the objections are, we will now consider.

I. The imagined Original Gospel must have been a work of the highest authority. This is implied in its having been made the basis of our first three Gospels, and, as is supposed by Eichhorn and Marsh, of other Gospels of a similar character. Bishop Marsh likewise supposes, that it was "drawn up from communications made by the apostles; and, therefore, that it was not only a work of good authority, but a work which was worthy of furnishing materials to any one of the apostles who had formed a resolution of writing a more complete history."† Eichhorn regards it as having been a work sanctioned by the apostles, and communicated by them to the first Christian missionaries, to guide the latter in their preaching.‡

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\* See before, p. 96, seqq.

† Marsh's Dissertation, p. 363: comp. Illustration of his Hypothesis, p. 15, seqq.

‡ Einleit. in d. N.T., vol i. p. 1, seqq., p. 162, seqq.

But the language of Bishop Marsh, in calling it a work "of good authority," and "worthy of furnishing materials for an apostle," is inadequate to express its character, if its origin, and the use which was made of it, were such as have been supposed. It must have been a work of the highest authority. Coming forth under the sanction of the apostles, and founded on their communications, it must have commanded universal credence among believers. It cannot be, nor is it, supposed, that it was a private, unpublished writing. It would not have been kept back from any who wished to possess it. It was translated (as is part of the hypothesis) into the Greek language; and copies of it, therefore, must have been widely circulating, wherever Christianity was spread. No satisfactory account, then, can be given, I do not say merely of the fact, *that there are no historical notices of the existence of such a work*; but of the fact, *that it has not been actually preserved, at least in its Greek translation*.

It may indeed be said that it was so altered, and so blended with various additions, in the different copies and refashionings which were made of it, as, in this manner, to become lost as a separate work. But those additions and alterations, according to the hypothesis, were made by anonymous copyists. They were supported, therefore, by no authority publicly known and acknowledged. No one could be certain, except through private information, by whom they were made, or on what grounds. But the Original Gospel, in its primary, uncorrupted state, was a work of a very different character, carrying with it the authority of the apostles. If we should admit, that some copies of this document, containing certain additions, had been made by particular individuals for their own use, yet there can be no reasonable question, that the copies in common circulation would be conformed to the original text.

To account for its loss, therefore, as a separate work, the opposite ground has been taken. It has been said, that "each of the first three Gospels contained the *whole* of this document," and that, consequently, whoever possessed any one of the former possessed the whole of the latter in its primitive state, and could therefore have had no motive for procuring a separate copy of it.\*

\* Marsh's Illustration of his Hypothesis, p. 54.



This is a proposition which will hereafter be examined at length; but I may here answer briefly, that the fact is not as stated. The Original Gospel does not lie imbedded, in its primitive form, in any one of the first three Gospels. We cannot strike off portions from either of them, so as to leave a work which, when fairly exhibited, any one will pretend is the ancient document in question, or any thing very like it. After the publication of these Gospels, therefore, the Original Gospel still remained a distinct work, and a work of the highest authority, value, and curiosity. It was at least as much worth preserving, and as likely to be preserved, together with those three Gospels, as any one of the three, together with the other two. But no such work has been preserved; no memory of such a work can be discovered; and therefore there is a strong improbability that such a work ever existed. If, for any reason, we were to imagine, that the disciples of Socrates sanctioned and circulated some history of their master, which has disappeared, and of which no mention is extant, the supposition would be less incredible. It would be difficult to conceive of any ancient work so unlikely to be lost and utterly forgotten, as an account of Christ, composed from the communications of his apostles, and published under their sanction, which had once been in common use among Christians.

II. Respecting the supposed additions to the Original Gospel, Bishop Marsh says, that in process of time, as new communications from the apostles and other eye-witnesses brought to light additional circumstances or transactions, which had been unnoticed in the Original Gospel, those who possessed copies of it added in their manuscripts such additional circumstances and transactions; and these additions, in subsequent copies, were inserted in the text.\* In order to form the documents imagined to have been used by the evangelists, five such transcriptions of the Original Gospel are the fewest that can be supposed; and these must have been made by transcribers who did not communicate their respective additions to each other.† Eichhorn says, that it had passed through many hands before being used by the authors of our present Gospels; and that its possessors, copyists,

\* Dissertation, p. 366.

† Ibid., p. 367.

and translators had made additions in their respective copies, either from their personal knowledge or from the information of credible men, of circumstances or transactions which had been omitted in those copies.\* It is supposed in these representations, that many different enlarged copies of the Original Gospel were in common circulation, superseding the copies of it in its primitive state.

But to this supposition are opposed considerations which have been already stated. Accounts claiming the highest credit, as sanctioned by the apostles, would not have been confounded with accounts collected by anonymous transcribers, as if the latter were of equal authority with the former. A work of such character and claims as the Original Gospel would not have been tampered with in the manner supposed. The original life of the Founder of our religion, proceeding from those whom he had selected to be eye-witnesses of the truth, and circulating among their disciples, was not a work to be subjected to a series of interpolations so extraordinary as to be without parallel in literary history.†

III. We may next observe, that the supposition that the Original Gospel was subjected to this continual process of fancied improvement, and that so much care was taken by so many transcribers to retouch and complete it, is altogether inconsistent with the genius and habits of the Jews of Palestine, among whom those transcribers must have been found. The Original Gospel is said to have been written in Hebrew, and the additions, in its different copies, to have been made in the same language.

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\* Einleit. in d. N.T., i. 172, 173.

† Considerations of this sort, perhaps, induced Bishop Marsh to change somewhat the representation which he had given, respecting the supposed additions to the Original Gospel, in his Dissertation on the Origin of the first three Gospels; and to propose another in one of his defences of that work. In his Dissertation, he speaks, in common with Eichhorn, of those additions as having been inserted in the text of the copies used by the evangelists; in his Illustration of his Hypothesis (p. 79), he supposes that they may have been only written in the margin of their copies each of which, accordingly, would contain the same text of the original Hebrew document, surrounded with different sets of these "marginal additions."

But the Jews of Palestine were not writers. They had no profane literature. They had scarcely any acquaintance with other books than the books of the Old Testament. With the exception of these writings, they were not in the habit of relying upon books to preserve the memory of facts or doctrines. Their literature, such as it was, connected almost solely with their religion and laws, was, in great part, traditionary and oral. Now, under a strong impulse, and the action of very powerful motives, writers may appear among such a people, as did the evangelists and apostles,—writers discovering all that want of skill and facility in composition which characterizes the Gospels; but, such being the state of letters among the Jews of Palestine, it would have been very foreign from their habits to commit to writing, in the margin of their manuscripts of the Original Gospel, accounts of particular transactions and sayings, not mentioned in it. Being unaccustomed to the use of books except those of the Old Testament, and having but an imperfect sense of the utility of books, it is not to be believed, that the possessors of that work should at once have become so busy about correcting and completing it in their particular copies. They never would have thought of making a record of any new fact which might have come to their knowledge, through fear that it would be forgotten by themselves, or that its memory would perish, unless put down in writing. Even among readers of the present day, different as our intellectual habits are from those of the Jews, and accustomed as we are to rely upon books and writings as the depositories of our knowledge, it is rare to make manuscript additions to a work of new facts connected with its subject. Especially, one is not likely to record in this manner facts of common notoriety. But those narratives respecting Christ, which we find in the first three Gospels, were, without doubt, such as the apostles readily communicated, and such, therefore, as were familiarly known to their converts.

IV. Let us suppose, however, that the imagined Original Gospel with its various enlarged copies, may have existed. Still, we cannot believe that the evangelists would each have made use of such an enlarged copy of it, in the manner supposed, as the basis of his work. According to the hypothesis, the

additional matter in the respective documents used by them had been collected by a succession of transcribers. But the Apostle Matthew would not have had recourse to such indirect and uncertain authority, for accounts of acts and discourses of our Saviour, which either he himself, or the other apostles, had seen and heard. He would not have gone among the Christian converts to learn from them what had been communicated to them by himself and the other apostles, concerning the life of his Master, so that he might collect materials for his history. To admit the hypothesis is to admit, that he, though an eye-witness and the companion of eye-witnesses, chose to adopt the narratives of individuals who had received their knowledge more or less remotely from himself, and from others like himself. It is to suppose, that the information which had been derived from apostles and eye-witnesses, after passing through various channels, flowed upward to supply its source. The difficulty is essentially the same in regard to Mark and Luke, the constant companions of the apostles. They would not have adopted the writings supposed, as their main authority. They would not have had recourse to so indirect and unsatisfactory a mode of obtaining those materials for their history, which they might have received, and which, indeed, they could not but be continually receiving, at first hand, from those with whom they were intimately conversant. It serves, likewise, to aggravate the improbability of the supposition in question, that each of the first three evangelists is represented as having been content with one of the enlarged copies of the Original Gospel, when there were, at least, two other different forms of it in existence, and one does not know how many more. We must believe them to have taken but little pains to procure and compare documents.

V. The supposition, that the first three evangelists thus formed their histories, is, besides, opposed to Luke's own testimony, and to all the historical evidence which bears upon the subject. The latter evidence is confirmed by its correspondence with what we may reasonably suppose to have been the case. St. Luke thus speaks in the commencement of his Gospel: "Since many have undertaken to arrange a narrative of the events accomplished among us, conformably to the accounts given us by those who

were eye-witnesses from the beginning, and have become ministers of the religion, I have determined also, having accurately informed myself of all things from the beginning, to write to you, most excellent Theophilus, a connected account, that you may know the truth concerning the relations which you have heard." In these words, Luke recognizes distinctly the accounts of the apostles as the primary authority for the history of Jesus. To those accounts it was the purpose of all written narratives to conform. Having constant and direct access to this primary source of information, it was on this, therefore, that he relied. The composition of his own Gospel shows, that he was not satisfied with any of the narratives extant with which he was acquainted. They probably contained more or less error, the accounts of the apostles having been misunderstood by the narrator. Luke, therefore, would not adopt any one of these as his main authority. When he speaks of the apostles, with whom he was conversant, as the sources of information respecting the history of Christ, and of his own diligence in collecting information, we cannot believe, that all he meant was, that he had obtained two of the previous documents referred to by him, which had passed through the hands of several transcribers, who had enlarged them with new matter; and that he contented himself with translating these documents, and making a few additions and perhaps corrections.

We learn from Luke, that the written accounts of the ministry of Christ, which were in the possession of some Christians at the time when he wrote, were founded, directly or indirectly, upon the oral accounts of the apostles. Without such express information, we might have concluded, beforehand, that this must have been the fact. The apostles must have been continually called upon to relate the actions and discourses of Christ; and their conversation and preaching must have afforded, to one conversant with them, authentic materials for such a history as we find in any of our first three Gospels. That such were the materials principally used by Luke, we may conclude from what has been said. That Mark thus derived his information is stated by Papias, who wrote, probably, not more than about sixty years after the evangelist. According to him, Mark accompanied Peter, who, it would appear, was not able to use the Greek language with freedom, as his interpreter, and wrote down from memory these

actions and discourses of Christ which the apostle had narrated in his preaching.\* The account of Irenæus is the same: "Mark," he says, "the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing what Peter had preached; and Luke, the companion of Paul, recorded the Gospel preached by him."† Clement of Alexandria‡ and Tertullian,§ with other later fathers, make similar statements respecting the Gospels of Mark and Luke. But it is unnecessary to multiply quotations; since the fact cannot be disputed, that it is the uniform testimony of ancient writers, that the narratives contained in the first three Gospels were such as had been orally related by the apostles, and that Matthew wrote down what he had preached, and Mark and Luke what they had heard.

VI. There are two aspects under which the character of the supposed Original Gospel has been presented, both equally required by the hypothesis, but irreconcilable with each other.

On the one hand, it appears as a work drawn up from communications made by the apostles, sanctioned by them, circulating widely among Christians, so as very early to be translated into Greek, and forming the basis of three out of four of those histories of Christ which alone obtained general reception among Christians as the foundation of their faith. It seems impossible that such a work should have perished, and all memory of it have been lost.

But the hypothesis equally demands, that a different view should be given of it, according to which the writing in question was only a brief abstract of some of the principal events in Christ's ministry. It contained what the three evangelists have in common; that is, those passages in which they all coincide with one another in presenting the same sense, though, perhaps, in different words. There have been very vague notions of what may be called common in the contents of the first three Gospels; but in the sense just explained, which is required by the hypothesis, the matter common to those Gospels would not form a work of half the size of Mark's Gospel. Accordingly, Bishop Marsh

\* See before, p. 139.      † See before, p. 72.      ‡ See before, p. 78  
§ Advers. Marc., lib. iv. c. 5, p. 416.

calls the supposed document "the first sketch of a narrative of Christ's ministry,"\* and says, "It must not be considered as a finished history, but as a document containing only materials for a history; and, as those materials were probably not all communicated at the same time, we must suppose that they were not all placed in exact chronological order."† They are supposed to have been in the order in which Mark and Luke coincide, in opposition to Matthew. According to Eichhorn, it was a "rough sketch," "defective," "imperfect," "unfinished;" to the text of which the briefest narratives that can be selected by comparing together the parallel passages of the first three Gospels, and those of which the clauses are least connected, approximate most nearly.‡

Now, as the former account of the book seemed to make it incredible that such a work should have perished, so this last account appears to render it equally incredible that such a work should have existed. According to this view of it, it must have been more like a collection of memoranda for a history, than a history itself. No reasonable purpose of a work of this kind can be imagined. It could not have been to aid the memory of the apostles and the first preachers of Christianity, and their immediate converts. The facts minuted down in it were not likely to slip from their recollection. It could not have been to convey instruction to those who had no other or no adequate means of obtaining a knowledge of the history of Jesus. It was much too meagre for this purpose. It was in no respect adapted to such an end. It must have required a perpetual commentary to render it intelligible. Such a work must have been equally worthless to any class of readers for whom one may fancy it to have been intended.

It may be worth while to add the remark, that, if the apostles collectively had been concerned in the preparation of any history of Jesus, there is no part of it to which we may reasonably suppose they would have given more attention than to the narrative of the death and resurrection of their Master. In regard to these events, there was a special reason for comparing together

\* Dissertation, p. 196.

† Ibid., p. 362.

‡ Euseb. in d. N.T., i. 169, seqq., 188.

their separate knowledge, as different circumstances had been witnessed by different individuals. But, throughout that portion of the history which follows the apprehension of Jesus, there is scarcely a ground for a pretence, that traces of a common document may be discovered.

VII. But, in the last place, the hypothesis in question does not correspond to, and explain, the phenomena presented by the first three Gospels. That it does correspond to them is regarded by its defenders as the main proof of its truth. If this proof fail, therefore, the hypothesis must fall at once, without the pressure of those objections which have been urged against it.

We may observe, then, that in order to render probable the existence of the supposed Original Gospel, used as a document by the first three evangelists, we should be able, in each of their Gospels, to discover certain portions which would easily separate from the rest of the work, and which, when arranged in order, would compose such a document as is imagined to have existed. This document, as disengaged from each of the Gospels, should agree with itself in ideas and in expression, without any other differences than might fairly be accounted for as intentional improvements. The case should be similar in regard to those additions to this document which were used in common by any two of the evangelists. These results are what we might expect from the use supposed of common written documents. According to the hypothesis, their language was, in great part, faithfully copied or translated; they resembled the Gospels in their modes of conception and narration, and generally in their use of words; and therefore no deviations from them would be made, except for what was esteemed at least a good reason. The coincidence among the first three evangelists is thought to be such as can be accounted for only by the supposition of their having copied common written documents. But, upon this supposition, it would be unreasonable to believe, that they did not uniformly copy those documents, except where they found sufficient cause for alteration. The same may be said of the transcribers, who are imagined to have intervened between the composition of the Original Gospel and that of our first three Gospels; and to have gradually enlarged the former by their additions, till



it assumed the three different forms in which it was used by the evangelists. They would not have struck off from the text of their fundamental document, a work of the highest authority, into mere wanton or unimportant variations. If such a document, therefore, had ever existed, and had been used as the basis of our first three Gospels, each of them would have contained it in something very like its original form. We should still be able to separate it from the additional matter which had gathered round it. But, as has been before said, no such restoration of the Original Gospel can be effected. No such common document, serving as a basis of each of the first three Gospels, can be discovered by a comparison of them with each other. Yet the defenders of the hypothesis, having recognized that the restoration of the Original Gospel is essential to the proof of its ever having existed, have spoken as if this restoration might be, and had been, effected.

Eichhorn affirms, that, by comparing the first three Gospels together, "we are able, even now, to separate the earlier Life of Jesus (the Original Gospel) from all subsequent additions, and, collecting it out of those Gospels, to restore it again free from all the traditions of later times;"\* and he himself undertakes its restoration.† Bishop Marsh says respecting Eichhorn's attempt, that "he has investigated the contents of the assumed original document as it existed in its primitive state."—"The principle which he adopts in this investigation is the following: that all those portions which are common to all three evangelists were originally contained in the common document."—"Hence, according to Eichhorn, the original document contained the following sections, which are common to all the three evangelists." He then gives a table of the contents of forty-two sections (afterwards enlarged by Eichhorn to forty-four), in which the evangelists relate, in common, the same transactions; and adds: "These were the contents, according to Eichhorn's hypothesis, of the original document supposed to have been used by St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke. They contain a short but well-connected representation of the principal transactions of Christ, from his baptism to his death; they are such as might be

\* Einleit. in d. N.T., i. 145.

† Ibid., i. pp. 186-304

expected in the first sketch of a narrative of Christ's ministry." \* This language is exceedingly vague; since, in the forty-two or forty-four sections of Eichhorn, the parallel passages of the three evangelists vary much from each other, and it cannot be determined, therefore, what Bishop Marsh meant by "portions common to all three evangelists," or what he asserts to have been the contents of the original document. Elsewhere he affirms, that "the whole of the document in its primitive state was [is] contained in each of the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke." † Eichhorn's general notion is, that, through a comparison of the parallel passages of the first three Gospels, we may disengage a brief original narrative, the common basis of all, by taking only those parts of such passages as are common to all, and combining them together. But his attempt to accomplish this, if the design were not avowed, might be considered as an argument to prove its impracticability. Of this, however, no other proof is necessary than what any concordance of the Gospels may furnish. The passages of the three evangelists, which are coincident or equivalent, in that strict sense of the terms which reasoning on this subject requires, are too few, and too much broken into fragments, to serve for the construction of an Original Gospel. The fact may be considered as acknowledged by Eichhorn himself in the very commencement of his undertaking; for he says, "We are seldom able to determine, as to the words, how much originally belonged to the primitive text, since we are acquainted with it only through translations" (the Original Gospel having been written in Hebrew, while our present Gospels are in Greek). "We must almost always be content with determining which of the evangelists retains it in the purest state." ‡ The mention of translations in this passage is one of those insertions of an irrelevant thought by which a writer confuses his conceptions, and disguises them from himself and others. What is required for the proposed restoration of the Original Gospel is, that certain passages should be selected from each

\* Dissertation, pp. 192-196.

† Defence of the Illustration, p. 38. See also a passage to the same effect, quoted from him before, on p. 492.

‡ Einleit. in d. N.T., i. 188.

of the three Gospels, *equivalent in their direct meaning* to passages that may be selected from the other two, and capable of being put together into a regular narrative of the ministry of Jesus. If in each of the Gospels were incorporated a *correct translation* of such a narrative, this might easily be done.

But all that has been actually performed is little more than the simple operation of distinguishing the parallel passages of the first three Gospels, and then arranging in a table the titles of their subjects, in the order of Mark and Luke. The Original Gospel, it is concluded, consisted of accounts of facts and discourses, related in those passages, arranged in this order. But no one will pretend, when the statement is brought distinctly to this point, that there may be found in each Gospel a series of words coincident in meaning with a similar series to be found in each of the other two, which may therefore be considered as representing the text of the Original Gospel. The error has been in considering as common to the three Gospels narratives different from each other, because they relate in common to the same events. Identity of subject has been confounded with identity of form and circumstance.

The accounts in the first three Gospels, which relate to the same events, are in no case strictly the same. They are corresponding accounts, resembling each other more or less closely, sometimes presenting very striking coincidences, and, at other times, diverging into real or apparent discrepancies. Throughout those writings, the narratives of the same events present such variations from each other as show, that the authors of the Gospels did not respectively copy them from the same written archetype, but were independent narrators. To this fact we will now attend.

To the supposition, that any one of the first three evangelists copied from either of the others, it has been considered as a strong objection, that in this case, when we find differences in the relation of the same events, we must view them as intentional alterations, that often no purpose of such alterations can be discovered. and, consequently, it is improbable that they would intentionally be made. But it does not seem to have been observed, that the hypothesis of a common document is exposed

equally to this objection. We can no more account for the variations of the evangelists from the text of the Original Gospel, than, upon the other supposition, we can account for their variations one from another. If it be said, that the alterations in question were not made by the evangelists, but by that series of transcribers who are imagined to have intervened between the composition of the Original Gospel and that of our first three Gospels, this is merely throwing back the difficulty, without removing it. The objection is, not that these alterations were made by any particular individuals, but that they were made at all. At the same time, if it be supposed that those previous transcribers made wanton or unreasonable changes in the text which they were copying, the authority of their copies is still further diminished; and it becomes still more improbable, that these copies should have been used by the evangelists in the manner supposed.

It is to be observed, that it is not the importance of the changes from the text of the original document, that one or more of the evangelists must have made or adopted, which is the point to be considered; because, for important changes, a reason might exist: but that it is the trifling nature of many of these variations which renders it improbable that they would have been made. With these views, let us compare together the different accounts of the cure of Peter's wife's mother, and of many others at Capernaum, as related by the three evangelists.

MATT. viii. 14-16.

And Jesus, going to the house of Peter,

saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever.

And he touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she rose

MARK i. 29-34.

And immediately, upon their going out of the synagogue, they went to the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

And Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever; and they immediately spoke to him about her. And he went to her, and raised her up, taking hold of

LUKE iv. 38-41.

And, leaving the synagogue, he entered the house of Simon.

And Simon's wife's mother was laboring under a great fever. And they entreated him for her sake. And, standing over her, he rebuked the fever, and

## MATT viii. 14-16.

up, and attended upon them.

And, when it was evening, they brought to him many demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all those who were diseased.

## MARK i. 29-34.

her hand; and the fever immediately left her, and she attended upon them.

And when it was evening, the sun having set, they brought to him all who were diseased, and the demoniacs. And the whole city was collected about the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he did not suffer the demons to speak, because they knew him.

## LUKE iv. 38-41.

it left her; and, rising up directly, she attended upon them.

And, when the sun had set, all who had with them persons ill with various diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands upon every one of them, and healed them. And demons departed from many, crying out, and saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he rebuked them, and did not allow them to speak, because they knew him to be the Messiah.

If we imagine an original narrative as the basis of these three accounts, it is evident, that two at least of the evangelists, or their predecessors, must have varied from it in a manner for which no satisfactory reason can be given. It will simplify our language on the subject, and the result of the argument will be the same, to speak of these variations as made by the evangelists themselves.

It is not probable, then, that Matthew, if he had found the name of Simon in a document sanctioned by the other apostles, would have altered it to Peter; or that Mark or Luke would have changed Peter to Simon. If the written account, which Luke was following, had simply said, that Peter's wife's mother was lying sick with a fever, there is no likelihood that he would have changed the expression, so as to say, that she was "laboring under a great fever;" or, if this had been the original statement, no reason can be given why Matthew and Mark should have substituted words less strong. With a written account for their guide, neither Mark nor Luke would have thought it necessary to insert the circumstance, that her friends requested the miraculous aid of Jesus. Nor, if this had stood in the original

narrative, could there have been any cause for the omission of it by Matthew. "And he touched her hand," says Matthew; "And he went to her, and raised her up, taking hold of her hand," says Mark; "And, standing over her, he rebuked the fever," says Luke: whichever of these may be fancied the original expression, it would be difficult to suggest a cause, why two of the evangelists changed it for another. Luke says, "And he rebuked the fever," which words are neither in Matthew nor in Mark; yet they are not likely to have been inserted by Luke, or to have been omitted by the other two evangelists in transcribing from the supposed document. Nor would Mark, I think, if he had been copying a previous account, have interposed his favorite word "immediately" three times, in so short a narrative.\*

In the account of the cures performed in the evening, Mark and Luke add circumstances not mentioned by Matthew, — respecting the crowd about the door, the exclamations of the demoniacs, and the silence imposed on them by Jesus; but, in regard to these circumstances, there is no appearance, that the two evangelists used any common written authority. Nor is any solution to be given of their other variations in this account, from Matthew and from each other, upon the supposition, that a narrative of the supposed Original Gospel was taken by each as the basis of his own.

I have selected this example merely for its brevity. It may serve as a specimen of those appearances which run through all the parallel passages of the three evangelists, and which show that they did not transcribe or translate from any common written document, because, upon this supposition, the passages must be regarded as presenting evident variations from the text of that document, which it is not to be believed that any copyist, and especially copyists like the evangelists, would have made. I will give a single other specimen, without any critical remarks upon it, which, like the former, I select for its shortness.

\* The word *εὐθέως*, *immediately*, occurs, according to Schmidt's Concordance, forty times in Mark's Gospel; that is, as many times as in all the other books of the New Testament.

## MATT. xii. 46-50.

And while he was yet addressing the multitude, lo! his mother and kinsmen stood without, wishing to speak with him.

And some one said to him, Lo! thy mother and kinsmen stand without, wishing to speak with thee. But he answered him who told him, Who is my mother? and who are my kinsmen? And, stretching forth his hand toward his disciples, he said, Lo! my mother and my kinsmen! For whoever may do the will of my Father in heaven is my kinsman, and kinswoman, and mother.

## MARK iii. 31-35.

Then his mother and his kinsmen came, and, standing without, sent to him to call him. And the multitude were sitting round him; and some said to him, Lo! thy mother and kinsmen and kinswomen are without, wishing for thee. And he answered them, Who is my mother? or my kinsmen? And, looking round upon those who were sitting about him, he said, Behold! my mother and my kinsmen! For whoever may do the will of God is my kinsman, and kinswoman, and mother.

## LUKE viii. 19-21.

Then his mother and kinsmen came to where he was, and were not able to get to him for the crowd. And this was told him by some who said, Thy mother and kinsmen stand without, desirous to see thee. But he answered them

My mother and my kinsmen are those who hear the teaching of God, and obey it.

“The difference of expression,” says Eichhorn, “and the identity of the train of thought, assure us that we here read three different Greek translations of the same Hebrew text.”\* It is evident, that, in this remark, resemblance and general equivalence of ideas are confounded with identity. The passages present no appearances, which do not accord with the supposition, that each of the evangelists, independently of any written document, was recording, conformably to his own conception of it, a well-known transaction, that had been often orally related; but it is impossible, that their three varying accounts should have been founded upon one original written narrative, from which its transcribers and translators did not depart without some reasonable motive.

We proceed to another consideration. The verbal coincidences

\* Einleit. in d. N.T., i. 248.

between Mark and Luke are supposed to have been produced by the circumstance, that, in translating the same Hebrew document, both evangelists derived assistance from a Greek translation of it, which had been made before the composition of their works. But the verbal coincidence between Mark and Luke is not great. It consists, for the most part, of single clauses or sentences, rarely extending unbroken through two whole sentences together. It amounts in all to less than the twelfth part of Mark's Gospel. A similar objection, therefore, to that which we have just been considering, presents itself to this supposition. It requires, to render it probable, much more *identity* of language than exists between the evangelists, unless we imagine them to have departed, without reason, from their common help, the former Greek translation. It represents both the evangelists as going through this Greek translation, picking out a few sentences and clauses of sentences here and there, and these, as far as we can judge, the renderings of passages that offered no peculiar difficulty, and, after copying perhaps a dozen words, resuming their own language. The evangelists would not have had recourse to a translation so defective as to afford them such scanty assistance.

I will mention one other characteristic of the Gospels, which seems wholly irreconcilable with the hypothesis we are considering. It is the uniform and distinguishing style of conception, narration, and language apparent in each. The Gospel of Luke, according to the hypothesis, must be a compound of materials furnished by at least five different writers, — the author of the Original Gospel, the compiler who made the additions to it which Luke has in common with Matthew alone, the compiler who made the additions which he has in common with Mark alone, the author of the imagined *Gnomologia*, and himself. I mention Luke's Gospel as the more striking case, because we have this in the original; whereas Matthew's Gospel, being extant only in a translation, there is one particular, its uniformity in the use of language, from which we cannot argue with the same confidence. But Matthew's Gospel is distinguished by other well defined features, though, according to the hypothesis, it was composed of as various materials as those of Luke's Gospel. So



also was that of Mark, except that he is not thought to have used the *Gnomologia*. But throughout each of the Gospels, except in the account of the miraculous conception by Luke, of which I have already spoken, and in some few passages, before noticed, which lie under the suspicion of being spurious, there is no diversity of character betraying the work of different hands. The uniform texture of each Gospel shows it not to be a piece of patchwork. Each proves itself to be the production of a single writer, by discovering throughout the workings of an individual mind.

Notwithstanding, therefore, the ingenuity and labor with which the hypothesis in question has been defended, I believe the objections to which it is exposed occur, in a more or less definite form, to almost every one who has examined it. It supposes an Original Gospel, sanctioned by the apostles; yet, had such a work existed, we cannot believe, that, even if the Hebrew original had perished, its Greek translation would have been lost, and no memory of the book remain. It supposes this book to have been treated in a manner without a parallel in literary history, and wholly inconsistent with the authority which must have been ascribed to it. It implies a solicitude about the finishing and refashioning of writings, altogether inconsistent with the character and habits of the Jews of Palestine. It requires us to believe, that the evangelists copied into their histories the collections of anonymous individuals; when one of them was an eye-witness of the events which he related, and the other two were in habits of continual intercourse with those who, like him, were the primary sources of information respecting the history of Jesus, and the business of whose lives was to afford this information to others. It is inconsistent with the account which Luke gives of the manner in which he procured the materials for his Gospel, and with the historical notices which we have of the composition of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, — notices which, so far as they represent these Gospels as containing what the apostles had before delivered orally, are confirmed by their intrinsic probability. And it fails of its proposed object. It does not explain the phenomena of the agreement and disagreement of the first three Gospels; but, on the other hand, it is

wholly irreconcilable with the appearances those Gospels present. For it supposes, that an original document was so used as the basis of the first three Gospels, that it is still preserved in each; while, in fact, no such document can be discovered. On the contrary, in the unsuccessful attempts made to restore this document, it becomes necessary to represent it as so brief, defective, and unsatisfactory, that we cannot believe such a work existed, because we can discern no purpose for which it could have been intended. The hypothesis implies, that the correspondences of the three Gospels may be separated from their differences by a sort of mechanical process, so that the former may afterward be brought together and form a connected whole; while, in fact, the one and the other are blended so intimately as continually to appear together in the same narrative. In attempting to account for the correspondences of these books with each other, it presents a solution which requires much more correspondence than exists. And, in the last place, the number of writers whom it represents as contributing materials for the Gospels is irreconcilable with the individuality of character evident in each of them.

#### SECTION IV.

##### *Proposed Explanation of the Correspondences among the First Three Gospels.*

What account, then, is to be given of the striking correspondences, in matter and language, which exist among the first three Gospels? I answer, that the phenomenon may, I think, be explained by the following considerations:—

The discourses of the apostles and first preachers of Christianity must have consisted, in great part, of narratives concerning the life of Jesus. In calling men to receive his religion, they must have made known to them who he was, what he had done, and what he had taught and commanded. All the information which we now derive from the first three Gospels must have been orally communicated by them over and over again. They must have related his miracles, to show on what grounds he claimed divine

authority; and the other events of his life, to illustrate his character. In teaching their disciples, they would quote his own words, as the most authoritative expression of the truths which he made known, and as affording the most satisfactory information respecting his doctrines and commands. In these words of Jesus his religion was embodied; they dwelt in the minds and hearts of his apostles; they would be continually on their lips; and, in quoting them for the instruction of their converts, they would often be led to relate the occasion on which they were uttered.

By far the greater part of our Lord's ministry had been passed at a distance from Jerusalem, either in Galilee or elsewhere; accounts of it had been brought to that city only by report, and had, doubtless, been mixed with many errors, through the mistakes and overheated imaginations of one class of relaters, and the bitter prejudices of another. At Jerusalem the twelve apostles generally resided for some years after Christ's ascension; and it must have been one main part of their duty to present to those who were willing to listen a true account of their Master's actions, in contradiction to such false reports as had prevailed.

Another cause, which must have led the apostles to narrate events in the life of their Master, was their applying to him passages in the Old Testament which they regarded as prophetic. In doing so, they must have given an account of the facts to which they believed such passages to relate. The applications of supposed prophecies, that we find in the Gospel of Matthew, would be unintelligible without the narratives with which they are connected; and the same would equally be the case with an oral as with a written discourse.

But, in speaking of the occasions which must have continually led the apostles and first preachers of Christianity to give accounts of the ministry of Jesus, we must not forget the intense curiosity that would be felt, by all but his determined enemies, respecting the wonderful transactions of his life; and the deep interest which every true convert to his religion must have had to learn what might be known concerning him, and to be able, upon the highest authority, to separate the truth from falsehood. The apostles, and other eye-witnesses of the ministry of Jesus, possessed knowledge of the greatest curiosity and interest; they were most ready to communicate it; and there can be no doubt, that they were

often called upon to make such communication, or, in other words, that they often had occasion to repeat narratives of the same events which we now find recorded in the first three Gospels.

It was required in an apostle, that he should have been a companion of Jesus during his ministry, "from the baptism of John to that day on which he was taken up;" and the ground of this requisition evidently was, that an apostle must be one who was able to state upon his own knowledge the events in the public life of his Master. Thus St. John says to those whom he addressed in his Epistle: "What took place from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have beheld, and our hands have handled, concerning the life-giving doctrine, — for Life has been revealed, and we saw and bear testimony, and announce to you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and has been revealed to us, — what we have seen and heard, we announce to you, so that you may share with us." And St. Luke, whose words may again be quoted, in commencing his Gospel, refers directly to the sources, and the only sources, from which an authentic written narrative of the life of Jesus could be derived: "Since many," he says, "have undertaken to arrange a narrative of the events accomplished among us, conformably to the accounts given us by those who were eye-witnesses from the beginning, and have become ministers of the religion, I have determined also, having accurately informed myself of all things from the beginning, to write to you, most excellent Theophilus, a connected account, that you may know the truth concerning the relations which you have heard."\* Luke's own

\* Different interpreters have understood some of the expressions in this passage in different ways, but with variations that do not affect the main purpose for which I have quoted it. I have adopted that sense of the words which seems to me most probable. In the last clause, my rendering is different from any that I recollect to have seen ("that you may know the truth concerning the relations you have heard"). Most modern expositors agree in effect with the Common Version, in understanding St. Luke as meaning, "that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed;" that is, that thou mightest know that they are certain. But the words of Luke are, *ἵνα ἐπιγνῶς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν*; and I conceive *λόγων* in the genitive to depend upon *περὶ*,

Gospel, and all the other compilations which he mentions, were, according to him, founded upon information derived from the apostles, and perhaps other preachers of the religion, who had been eye-witnesses of the ministry of Christ; that is, upon their oral narratives. This source was always open; and, from the nature of the case, any account of Christ's ministry by a Christian, written in the apostolic age, must have been intended to embody such narratives, — the narratives of those who alone could bear personal testimony to the facts related; narratives which, we cannot doubt, had been orally communicated many times before they were committed to writing by any one of the evangelists.

In confirmation of the supposition, that those narratives concerning Jesus, which we now find in the three Gospels, were first orally communicated by the apostles, and preserved in the memory of their disciples, it is superfluous to appeal to the custom of the Jewish Rabbis, who communicated their traditions orally to their disciples, and required that they should be committed to memory. These traditions formed an amount of matter which, in the age of the apostles, probably exceeded, very many times,

and not upon ἀσφάλειαν. The obvious meaning of St. Luke, if his words are to be thus constructed, is, that he wrote in order that Theophilus might know τὴν ἀσφάλειαν, "what was to be relied upon," that is, "the truth," in relation to the accounts he had heard. This meaning seems best to suit the context. A proper cause is assigned for the composition of an accurate history by one who had diligently inquired into the facts; while, if the object of Luke had only been to assure Theophilus of the certainty of what he had *already* heard, it may seem that his simple affirmation would have been most to the purpose. To an unbeliever or a sceptic of those times, the mere history of Luke would have afforded no new evidence. A believer, as there is no reasonable doubt that Theophilus was, had been already convinced of the truth of Christianity; and if the term λόγοι is, as I conceive, to be understood in the sense of "narratives" respecting the life of Christ, St. Luke surely did not mean to vouch for the truth of all that Theophilus might have heard. Many incorrect and false accounts respecting Christ must have been in circulation in the times of the apostles, — accounts which first were contradicted by their oral narratives, and afterwards by the written narratives of the evangelists; and it is, I think, a want of attention to this fact which has prevented the words of Luke from being correctly understood

the contents of any one of the Gospels. Other historical parallels, as they are called, have been suggested. But it implies a very imperfect comprehension of the state of mind which must have existed in the apostles and their disciples, to suppose, that their remembrance of the events in the life of Jesus depended upon an effort of recollection. Their strongest and holiest feelings were associated with those events; the vivid memory of them was for ever present to their minds, their spring of action by day, and their meditation by night. We must not suppose, that the narrative of events the most wonderful that man ever witnessed, and of words the most weighty that man ever heard, was taught and learnt like a schoolboy's task or the traditions of the Rabbis. From the manner in which the Rabbis taught, we learn only that the Jews were accustomed to oral instruction, and hence may more readily familiarize ourselves with the conception, that long portions of the history of Christ, or perhaps a general account of his ministry, were sometimes orally communicated by the apostles at once.

The business of the apostles and first teachers of Christianity was to preach Christ, to make him known. To him they constantly directed the view of their disciples. What he taught was the religion of which they were the ministers; his miracles were proofs of its divinity; his virtues were held forth by them as the example after which his followers were to form themselves. As religious instructors, they taught nothing upon their own authority. The Gospels are not now more essential to our knowledge of Christianity, than must have been their oral accounts of Jesus to the first converts.

We conclude, then, that portions of the history of Jesus, longer or shorter, were often related by the apostles; and it is evident, that the narrative, at each repetition by the same individual, would become more fixed in its form, so as soon to be repeated by him with the same circumstances and the same turns of expression. Especially would no one vary from himself in reporting the words of his Master.

We have next to consider, that the apostles, generally, would adopt a uniform mode of relating the same events. The twelve

apostles, who were companions of our Saviour, resided together at Jerusalem, we know not for how long a period, certainly for several years, acting and preaching in concert. This being the case, they would confer together continually; they would be present at each other's discourses, in which the events of their Master's life were related; they would, in common, give instruction respecting his history and doctrine to new converts, especially to those who were to go forth as missionaries. From all these circumstances, their modes of narrating the same events would become assimilated to each other. Particularly would their language be the same, or nearly the same, in quoting and applying passages of the Old Testament as prophetic, and in reciting the words of Jesus, whose very expressions they must have been desirous of retaining. But the verbal agreement among the first three Gospels is found, as we have seen, principally where the evangelists record words spoken by Christ or by others, or allege passages from the Old Testament. Elsewhere there is often much resemblance of conception and expression, but, comparatively, much less verbal coincidence.

Previously, then, to the composition of the first three Gospels, we may believe that the narratives which they contain had assumed, in the manner explained, a form more or less definite. Matthew, an apostle, would commit to writing those narratives which he and the other apostles had been accustomed to communicate orally. Mark and Luke, who derived their knowledge from the apostles, would record those narratives which they had heard from them. But, if the accounts of the apostles had been committed to writing by ever so many different historians, still, the written agreeing with the oral accounts, and the oral accounts agreeing with each other, all those accounts must have had a striking correspondence. But, however definite might be the form which any oral narrative had assumed, still there would be variations of language, and minor circumstances would be omitted or inserted, as it was orally related by different individuals, or by the same individual at different times, or recorded by different writers. We should expect, therefore, to find in histories in which these narratives were collected, such intermingled agreements and variations as appear in the first three Gospels. Thus,

then, generally, may the resemblance between the first three Gospels be explained. In the oral narratives of the apostles, we find their common archetype, — an archetype, from its very nature, partly fixed and partly fluctuating, and such, therefore, as is required to account at once for their coincidence and their diversity.\*

\* There are several remarks, which, to avoid breaking the connection of the text, I have here thrown into a note.

1. It deserves observation, that, with the exception of the history of the last days of our Saviour's life, the accounts of his ministry in the first three evangelists relate to events which took place either in Galilee, or elsewhere, at a distance from Jerusalem. With this part of his ministry the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the strangers who resorted there, being least acquainted, the apostles would be most frequently called upon to give information respecting it. How little was correctly known among the great body of the inhabitants of Jerusalem concerning the ministry of Jesus, appears incidentally from two passages in different evangelists. Upon his entry into that city, "The multitude that was with him," says John (xi: 17, 18), "bore testimony, that he had called Lazarus from the tomb, and raised him from the dead. On this account, also, the multitude came out to meet him, because they heard that he had performed this miracle." His many preceding miracles, it appears, would not have drawn upon him such attention. Matthew says (xxi. 10, 11): "As he was entering Jerusalem, the whole city was in commotion; saying, Who is he? And the multitudes" (among whom there were many, without doubt, who had followed him from Galilee) "said, This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth of Galilee." Thus, in the accounts of Christ's ministry in Galilee, and of some very striking discourses which he delivered during his last days in Jerusalem, we find remarkable correspondences among the first three evangelists, because these accounts were of a character to be often repeated by the apostles; while, in the relation of the minor circumstances attending his crucifixion and resurrection, there is much diversity, because, however important were the main events, his crucifixion was universally known, and it was universally known that the apostles affirmed his resurrection, and the minor circumstances attending those events were not adapted to convey any general instruction, and were therefore, as we may suppose, little dwelt upon by the apostles. In general we may remark, that according as what is related was adapted to take a strong hold upon the mind, and was likely to be often brought forward in the oral discourses of the apostles, the greater is the correspondence among the evangelists.

2. In accounting for the resemblance among the first three Gospels, we are led to consider the difference between them and the Gospel of John. To explain it, we may observe, that this Gospel is not properly a history of the



But, in order fully to explain the verbal coincidences among the three Gospels, we must take into view some other considerations. How is it, that there is an agreement in the use of the very same Greek words throughout many passages? We will first

ministry of Jesus. It supposes that history, as recorded in the first three Gospels, to be already known: it is founded upon it, and supplementary to it. It relates principally to what took place at Jerusalem, where our Saviour spent but a small portion of his ministry. It consists, in great part, of connected discourses of Jesus with the unbelieving Jews, and with his apostles, of which much has special and immediate reference only to the character and circumstances of those immediately addressed. It did not, like the narrative contained in the first three Gospels, constitute that elementary instruction in the history of Jesus, which was the first want of the converts to the new religion. Like the Epistles of the apostles, it implies that this had been already received.

8. But, it may be asked, if it was a principal business of an apostle to give information concerning the public life, the actions, and the discourses of Jesus, how was St. Paul qualified for his office? I answer, that, during the first part of his ministry, St. Paul, for some years, had Barnabas for a companion, whom we find very early associated with the apostles,\* and a very earnest preacher of Christ. Three years after his conversion, before he had properly assumed the office of an apostle, he was with Peter fifteen days at Jerusalem.† He travelled first with Mark, and afterwards with Luke, both historians of Christ, and had at command means of information similar to what they possessed. Though, before his conversion, an enemy of Christ, yet, being an enemy full of intelligence and zeal, it is probable that he was then as well acquainted with his history as any one not an immediate disciple. Jesus was watched, during his ministry, by Pharisees and teachers of the Law, some of whom came for that purpose from Jerusalem to Galilee.‡ St. Paul, therefore, was not likely to be ignorant concerning his deeds and sayings at the time of his own conversion, though the whole aspect under which he regarded them was changed by that event. Full as he then was of sorrow and veneration, and entire devotedness to the cause of Christ, and surrounded as he was by abundant means of informing himself concerning his character and history, and of correcting all his former misapprehensions respecting what he had said and done, there is nothing strange in supposing that he availed himself of those means; nay, it would be an incredible supposition, that he did not. In his Epistles, we find repeated references to the history of Jesus as it is related in the first three Gospels. The account of the last supper of our Lord is given by him in words, the greater part of which are identical with those of Luke.

\* Acts iv. 36

† Gal. i. 18.

‡ Luke v. 17.

attend to this agreement between Mark and Luke, both of whom originally wrote in the Greek language. This is to be explained by the fact, that, though the native language of the apostles was Hebrew, yet a great part of their conversation and discourses must have been in Greek. In Greek they must have addressed all who were not Jews; and to a large proportion even of Jews, the Hellenists, born and educated in foreign countries, the Greek was more familiar than the language of their nation. Many foreigners and Hellenists dwelt in Jerusalem, or resorted thither occasionally. The great national feasts, in particular, drew to that city Jews who usually resided in foreign countries. A considerable portion of the early Christians in Jerusalem was composed of Hellenists; \* and with Hellenists St. Paul there disputed after his conversion.† We find mention of various synagogues, in that city, of foreign Jews, who associated together according to the countries from which they came; ‡ and many of the natives of Palestine were sufficiently acquainted with the Greek language to use it for the purposes of communication. With the exception of St. Luke and St. Paul, the apostles and evangelists were uneducated men; yet all the writings which they have left us, except the Gospel of Matthew, were composed in Greek. There would even have been no strangeness, it appears, in addressing a promiscuous multitude at Jerusalem in the Greek language; for, upon the occasion of the tumult at the apprehension of St. Paul in that city, we are told only that he was heard with the more attention because he spoke in Hebrew. § As, therefore, the apostles wrote in Greek, so we may reasonably believe, that, while residing together in Jerusalem, they often taught in Greek, in the presence of each other; and that thus their expressions in this language, as well as in the Hebrew, became assimilated. We may in this manner explain whatever verbal agreement exists between St. Mark and St. Luke; especially as it is principally found in passages in which it was particularly to be expected, in reports of the words of our Saviour and others, and in quotations from the Old Testament. Their whole verbal coincidence in narrative does not, I believe, exceed the amount of more than six or eight verses of average length.

\* Acts vi. 1, seqq. † Acts ix. 29. ‡ Acts vi. 9. § Acts xxii. 2.

The Gospel of Matthew, having been originally written in Hebrew, was probably translated into Greek some time about the close of the first century. The verbal coincidences of its translation with the Gospels of Mark and Luke admit of one, and I think only one, satisfactory solution. The original of Matthew agreed with them essentially in many narratives and many sayings and discourses of Christ. These, or portions of these, were the same, except their expression in different languages; and the manner of their expression in the Greek language had been fixed by the Greek Gospels of Mark and Luke. But these Gospels being known to the translator of Matthew, when his original corresponded with them sufficiently, he was led to adopt their expressions.\*

One phenomenon in the Gospels still remains to be noticed. It is the agreement of Mark and Luke in their chronological misarrangement of some of the events which the first three evangelists relate in common. On the hypothesis of an Original Gospel, it is supposed that this misarrangement existed in that Gospel, and was copied from it by Mark and Luke, who were themselves ignorant of the true order of events, but was corrected by Matthew, who, as an apostle, was better informed. This, however, is only removing one difficulty by creating another; for it would be strange, that a misarrangement, which any apostle might have corrected, should exist in a work prepared under the direction of the apostles, and sanctioned by them, especially in a work so brief as to seem intended rather for a memorandum of the chronological series of events in Christ's ministry than for any other purpose. The explanation that has been proposed of the agreement among the Gospels, in the character of their narratives and their use of language, involves no solution of this difficulty. Admitting the truth of that explanation, the misarrangement in question becomes a separate and independent, though not very important, problem, requiring a solution of its own. But, in our ignorance respecting

\* I remarked in the first edition, that "the credit of this explanation belongs to Bishop Marsh." I have since observed that Grotius (*Introduc. ad Comment. in Matthæum*) says: "*Marci libro Græco usus mihi videtur quisquis is fuit Matthæi Græcus interpres.*" — *Note to Second Edition.*

all but the leading events of the apostolic age, whatever cause for it we may assign must be only conjectural.

One solution that has occurred to me is immediately connected with the account which has been given of the origin of the agreement among the Gospels: it is, that the correspondence in the arrangement of Mark and Luke had its source in the oral preaching and discourses of the apostles. It is not probable, that the apostles often, if ever, undertook to recite in one discourse, or in a connected series of discourses, all the transactions of the ministry of Jesus related by any one of the first three evangelists. According to the particular occasion presented, or the special object which they had in view, they would group together events, sayings, and discourses particularly adapted to their purpose. They would class their accounts of their Master, not narrate them chronologically. To this mode of teaching we may perhaps look as the occasion of the agreement between Mark and Luke in the displacing of some events, and as the occasion, likewise, of the general want of chronological arrangement in Luke, and of the existence of something of a systematical, founded upon a chronological, arrangement in Matthew.

This general solution may be accepted as probable, whether we can or cannot discover any special cause which might have affected the arrangement of those particular events to which Mark and Luke agree in giving a place different from that assigned to them by Matthew. It may therefore be scarcely worth while to enter into the inquiry, whether such causes can be conjectured. Yet it seems to me that they may be; and, as the subject will occupy but little space, I will venture to suggest them.

The most important instance of misarrangement, in which Mark and Luke both differ from Matthew, is in the place which they assign to the voyage to Gennesaret, with the miracles accompanying and following it.\* According to them, these events took place immediately after the delivery of the parable of the sower, and some other striking parables and sayings of Jesus. These parables and sayings are of a general character, relating to

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\* See before, p. 470, seqq.

the reception of the new religion, to the importance of listening to its truths, to its future rapid growth, and to the blessedness of its disciples. They are of the kind that might be repeated, by the apostles and first preachers of Christianity, to an audience who had collected to listen and to inquire, but many of whom had not yet professed themselves Christians. After having, in the words of their Master, warned such an audience, that the seed might fall on good ground or on bad; that they should give heed to what they heard; that the religion, which was but in its beginning, was, through the power of God, to extend itself widely; that to every one who had, more should be given; and that the disciples of Jesus were to him as his dearest relatives,\* — it would be natural to mention some of those displays of divine power upon which this new teacher founded his claims to divine authority: and perhaps no more striking series of miracles could have been selected, than his commanding the winds and waves to be still; his giving sanity to a raging demoniac, under circumstances so extraordinary; the cure of a woman, long diseased, by her merely touching his garment; and his restoring life to the daughter of Jairus. It is thus, perhaps, that we may explain how the relation of some of the most remarkable miracles of Jesus came to be connected with the recital of some of his parables and sayings, in which he set before men the importance of listening to the truths which he taught. They were, in consequence, thus connected by Mark and Luke; and the mistake into which Mark has particularly fallen, of supposing that the voyage to Gennesaret immediately followed the delivery of those parables,† was facilitated by the circumstance, that they were actually delivered from a vessel on the lake near the shore at Capernaum, and that Jesus immediately after left that city.‡

We pass to another of the chronological discrepancies among the evangelists. Matthew relates, that Jesus, previously to his entering Capernaum on a certain sabbath, cured a leper; while Mark and Luke relate this cure as having been performed when Jesus had left Capernaum, § after the sabbath just mentioned, upon which day

\* Mark iv. 1-32. Luke viii. 4-31.

† Matt. xiii. 1, 53

‡ See before, p. 477.

§ See before, p. 470.

he appears, from all the evangelists, first to have publicly preached in that city. Perhaps this disagreement may be thus explained. As Jesus, during his ministry in Galilee, fixed on Capernaum as his chief place of residence, setting out on his journeys from it and returning to it, we may suppose the apostles to have been accustomed to begin some short narrative of his ministry with the mention of this fact, and an account of his first appearance in Capernaum as a public teacher. No particular miracle, except this cure of a leper, is related by either of the first three evangelists as having been performed by Jesus before that event; and this miracle is related by Matthew as taking place on the morning of the same day. As, then, a brief oral account of Christ's preaching in Galilee would naturally commence with the mention of Capernaum as his chief place of residence, and as this would lead to an account of the first day of his public ministry spent in that city, the miracle of the cure of the leper, which preceded his entrance into it, must either have been passed over in silence, or introduced subsequently into the narrative. I suppose the latter course to have been adopted, on account of its being a miracle which excited particular attention, and to which particular importance had been attached; as appears from its being related circumstantially by all three of the evangelists, and from the fact that Mark and Luke represent it as a special cause why great multitudes flocked to Jesus. The particular impression which this miracle produced may be ascribed to its probably being the first, or one of the first, that Jesus performed in Capernaum or its immediate neighborhood, and therefore the first that most of the spectators of it had witnessed; to the horror with which leprosy was regarded among the Jews; to the confidence manifested by Jesus in putting his hand upon the infectious sufferer; to the incurable state of the disease by natural means, — for he “was full of leprosy;” \* and to the circumstance of our Saviour's sending the man to the priests, who were already his enemies, that they might certify, in effect, that a miracle had been performed.

In the only remaining case of any importance, in which Mark and Luke agree together in differing from the arrangement of

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\* Luke v. 12.

Matthew, the application of the general solution that has been proposed is obvious. According to this, narratives bearing upon the same point would be brought together in the oral discourses of the apostles. Now, there are two narratives, one relating to the disciples of Jesus plucking ears of grain on the sabbath, and the other to the miraculous cure of a man with a withered hand, likewise on the sabbath, which stand in immediate connection in all three evangelists. But, by Mark and Luke, an earlier period is assigned to these events than by Matthew.\* They record them immediately after their account of the conversation with the disciples of John and the Pharisees concerning fasting, which occurred at Capernaum. The two narratives were, I believe, brought into connection with this account of our Saviour's discourse concerning fasting, from the circumstance, that all three relations bear directly on the same subject, the worthless character of the ceremonial and superstitious observances of the Jews. In the one case, Jesus gave them to understand his estimate of their stated weekly fasts; and, in the other, of their bigotry about the keeping of the sabbath.

Thus the phenomenon of the misarrangement of events by Mark and Luke, in opposition to Matthew, may be accounted for. But another solution of it may likewise be given. Among the narratives relating to Jesus, mentioned by Luke in the beginning of his Gospel, there may have been one which had obtained more credit and a wider circulation than any other. Now, without supposing Mark or Luke to have drawn their narratives from it, or to have relied upon it as an authority for individual facts, or to have used its language, except so far as it coincided with forms of expression already familiar to them, they still may both have used it as a guide in respect to the succession of those events, with the true order of which it appears that they both were acquainted. It is to be observed, that it is only their coincidence with each other that presents any difficulty. The misarrangement in any one narrative which they may be supposed to have used in common requires no particular explanation.

\* See before, p. 473.

To return, then, to our general position, we suppose that the correspondences among the first three Gospels are to be explained by the fact, that the oral narratives of the apostles were their common archetype. Upon the supposition that those Gospels are genuine, it may be worth while to observe how little is assumed in coming to this conclusion, of which there can be any reasonable doubt. A great part of the oral discourses of the apostles must have been historical; for the acts and words of Jesus were the foundation of all that they taught, and the first object of the faith of their converts. And, when one of their number and two of their constant companions committed to writing accounts of their common Master, it could not be otherwise than that these written accounts should strikingly correspond with those which had been orally delivered, and consequently with each other.

## SECTION V.

### *Inferences from the Explanation which has been given of the Correspondences among the First Three Gospels.*

The appearances which the first three Gospels present, when compared together, are adapted to excite our curiosity and interest, because they are of so remarkable a character as to imply, that some extraordinary cause must have operated to produce them, and that the discovery of this cause will throw light on the early history of Christianity. Let us see, then, what, if we have reasoned correctly, may be inferred from the preceding investigation.

The conclusion, that no one of the first three evangelists copied from either of the other two, is important, as showing that their Gospels afford three distinct sources of information concerning the life of Jesus. The evangelists, therefore, in their striking correspondence in the representations of his character, miracles, and sayings, must be considered as strongly confirming each other's testimony. Nothing but reality, nothing but the fact that Jesus lived and taught as they represent, would have stamped his story so definitely and vividly on the minds of independent witnesses, and enabled them to write each so consistent with itself, and all so accordant



with one another. A false story concerning an imaginary character would have preserved no uniform type. It would have varied in its aspect according to the different temperament and talents, the conceptions and purposes, of its various narrators.

We may next observe, that, if the notion that one evangelist copied from another be given up, then the accordance among the first three Gospels proves them all to have been written at an early period, when the sources of authentic information were yet fully accessible, and before any interval had elapsed, during which the thousand exaggerations, perversions, and fables, to which the wonderful history of Jesus was particularly exposed, had had time to flow in, and to change its character as it might appear in different narratives.

If the evangelists did not copy one from another, it follows that the first three Gospels must all have been written about the same period; since, if one had preceded another by any considerable length of time, it cannot be supposed that the author of the later Gospel would have been unacquainted with the works of his predecessor, or would have neglected to make use of it; especially when we take into view, that its reputation must have been well established among Christians. Whatever antiquity, therefore, we can show to belong to any one of the first three Gospels, the same, or nearly the same, we may ascribe to the other two. Now, Luke, in the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, speaks of his Gospel in terms which imply that this work had been completed but a little while before; and, in the Acts, he brings down the history to the end of the second year of Paul's residence at Rome, which was some time after the sixtieth year of our era. According, likewise, to the remarks formerly made respecting the Gospel of Mark,\* it must have been written about the year 65, when St. Peter is supposed to have suffered martyrdom at Rome. We may conclude, therefore, that no one of the first three Gospels was written long before or long after the year 60.

Again, the Gospel of Matthew was written in Hebrew; and the

\* See p. 449.

present Greek translation of it was extant very early in the second century. But, before this time, the Gospels of Mark and Luke were in existence, and probably in extensive circulation; for we cannot account for the remarkable coincidence of language between our Greek translation of Matthew and those Gospels, except by the supposition, that the translator, through his familiarity with them, was led to adopt their expressions when suitable to his purpose.

We have seen, that the evangelists copied neither one from another, nor from common written documents, such as have been imagined. But if the supposition of an Original Gospel, receiving constant additions and alterations from successive transcribers, be unfounded, the notion connected with it, of the corruption of our present Gospels by similar additions and alterations, loses all appearance of probability. The former supposition has served to introduce the latter, has been blended with it, and has been regarded as affording the chief evidence of its truth. But, the whole theory concerning an Original Gospel falling to the ground, the notion of any such corruption of our present Gospels as has been supposed is left, unsupported by a plausible argument, to its intrinsic incredibility.

With that theory is likewise connected the supposition, that other more ancient gospels were in common use among Christians after the apostolic age, and before the late period, when, as it has been pretended, our present Gospels first came into general use. These more ancient gospels, it may be recollected, are imagined to have been, in common with our first three Gospels, derived from the Original Gospel; and all the books of this class are supposed to have agreed with, and differed from, one another in much the same manner as do now the three Gospels which alone remain. As there was nothing, according to the theory, to stop this process of refashioning the Original Gospel, and the consequent multiplication of new gospels more or less varying from one another, till about the close of the second century, when it is admitted that our present Gospels had assumed nearly the form they now possess, and had obtained general reception, it follows that many different compilations must have been in common use before. The infer-

ence, considered in its various other bearings, is incredible; but, if the theory of an Original Gospel be false, no compilations of the sort described could have existed.

A different ground, it is true, may be taken: the notion, that those earlier gospels descended, in common with our own, from an Original Gospel, may be abandoned; and it may still be maintained, that there were histories of Christ, — such, for instance, as those mentioned in the introduction to Luke's Gospel, — not only prior to our present Gospels, but in common use among Christians after the apostolic age, and during a great part of the second century. The supposition of gospels in common use before those which we now possess is thus presented in its simplest form, unembarrassed with any hypothesis respecting the mode of their formation. I shall here view it in reference only to the investigation in which we have been engaged.

The proposition, that our present Gospels, about the end of the second century, took the place of other gospels, which had before been regarded as of authority, cannot be made plausible, except on the theory of an Original Gospel, from which our present Gospels and those other gospels were equally derived. It is only by representing the supposed earlier gospels as works of the same character with those now extant, derived in a similar manner from the same source, so that all were but refashionings of the same original document or documents, that any plausibility can be given to the supposition, that our present Gospels, on the ground of their being more complete works of the same class, superseded those earlier narratives, which are imagined to have been comparatively imperfect. But when it is agreed, that those more ancient gospels, upon the supposition that any such were in common use during the second century, were not branches, growing with our present Gospels from a common stock, an Original Gospel, but were distinct works, permanent in their form, having each a proper individuality, then we perceive at once, that books which, since the apostolic age, had been in common use among Christians as authentic histories of their Master, could not have been displaced and annihilated by a new set of books, introduced about the end of the second century. It would be as easy to believe, that a new growth might spring up under a forest in full

vigor, and overshadow and choke the trees which, for more than a century, had been taking root in the soil.

## SECTION VI.

### *Illustration of the First Three Gospels to be derived from the Circumstances connected with their Composition.*

The view we have taken of the origin of the correspondences among the first three Gospels is important as regards the explanation of those Gospels, particularly that of Luke. It opens a new source of illustration.

The apostles, familiar as they were with the words of their Master, and continually using them in their discourses, would often quote them disjoined from their original connection. They would blend together those uttered at different times in relation to the same subject; and they would likewise naturally apply to new occasions his striking expressions and figurative language, so as sometimes to divert his words, more or less, from their primitive meaning, or at least from their primary reference. But these characteristics of their preaching would be likely to produce an effect on works bearing such a relation to it as we suppose the three Gospels to have done.

This effect is less obvious in the Gospel of Matthew than in that of Luke. But in Matthew's Gospel we find, I believe, what may be called a systematic, though quite natural arrangement, connected with his general regard to chronological order. When some striking occasion presented itself, he seems, in a few instances, to have brought together sayings of our Lord which he viewed as related to each other, but which were uttered at different times.

Thus, in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew appears to have intended to give a general view of our Lord's teaching, and, taking for his basis what was spoken on that occasion, to have connected with it other precepts and declarations, which, if I may so speak, had been attracted to and associated with that discourse, through their bearing on its main purpose or on particular subjects intro-

duced into it. In consequence, some of our Lord's words, as there given, belong, as may seem, to a later period of his ministry; some appear to have been called forth by particular occasions which afterwards occurred; and precepts which were accommodated to, and limited by, the peculiar and temporary circumstances of those who had devoted themselves to him as his disciples, and which perhaps were not addressed to them till their number was increased, and their conceptions of their new duties were more enlarged, are blended with precepts of universal obligation.

But perhaps the most important example of this characteristic of his Gospel is to be found in the prophecy, as given by him, of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the coming of the Son of man. This appears, from a comparison with Luke, to be a compilation of several discourses,\* the bearing and purport of all of which are not to be correctly comprehended without regarding them in connection with the occasions on which Luke reports them to have been delivered. It is to be recollected, that, according to the Gospel of Mark,† Matthew was not present at this discourse.

The effect resulting from the manner in which the apostles, in their teaching, may be supposed to have used the words of their Master, is little, if at all, to be discerned in the Gospel of Mark. His account of the sayings of our Lord is much more limited than that of either Matthew or Luke; and generally, of those which he reports, the relation to the circumstances which called them forth, and the relation to each other, appear to have been well settled. The influence of the oral teaching of the apostles on the construction of his Gospel seems to have extended little further, than to affect directly or mediately its chronological arrangement, as formerly suggested.‡

But the operation of those characteristics, which have been explained, of the oral teaching of the apostles on the Gospel of Luke,

\* Compare Luke xvii. 22-37 and xxi. 5-36 with Matt. xxiv. 1-42; Luke xii. 85-48 with Matt. xxiv. 42-51; and Luke xix. 11-27 with Matt. xxv. 14-30.

† Chap. xiii. 3.

‡ See *before*, p. 520, seqq.

was, I conceive, so great, that this Gospel, in consequence, presents throughout remarkable appearances, to which we will now attend. The proof of the correctness of the views of it which we are about to take must be drawn principally from a comparison of it with the Gospel of Matthew, though Mark may afford occasional assistance.

I. In the first place, Luke has sometimes, I think, given the words of Jesus in such a connection, that they have a meaning which he did not express, though it be one which he might have expressed. The following is an example:—

According to Matthew, Jesus, in forewarning his apostles of the persecution which they would endure from the enemies of his religion, tells them that in this they would be like him, that their treatment would be similar to his own, and charges them not to be deterred by it from proclaiming the truths which he had taught them. He says (x. 26-28):—

“Fear them not, then. For there is nothing covered which is not to be unveiled, nor any thing secret which is not to be made known. What I tell you in darkness, speak in the light; and what is whispered in your ear, proclaim on the house-tops. And fear not those who may kill the body, but cannot kill the soul: rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

The passage goes on with the words, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?” and those which follow.

Here, when it is said, “For there is nothing covered which is not to be unveiled,” the meaning is, that there were no secrets in his religion. It was to be fully proclaimed. Nothing was to be kept concealed through fear of men. Thus, Mark, after relating the parable of the sower, and its explanation to the disciples, represents our Lord as saying,\* “Is the lamp brought to be put under the measure or the bench, and not to be set on its stand? Nothing is hidden but that it may be made known, nor was any thing concealed but that it might be brought to light;” which words are, I think, to be understood thus:—I have not come to keep-back the truths of religion, but to reveal

\* Mark iv. 21, 22.

them. There is nothing in my discourses intended to hide them; there was nothing intended to conceal them in the parable you have just heard: on the contrary, my modes of speaking are adopted, because they are most likely effectually to impress these truths upon the minds of such hearers as I address.

Luke has one passage\* similar to the last. But, in another place, he ascribes these words to Jesus (xii. 1-5):—

“He said to his disciples, Above all things, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For every thing covered shall be laid open, and every thing concealed made known. What ye have spoken in darkness will be heard in light, and what ye have whispered in closets proclaimed upon house-tops.

“But I say to you, my friends, be not afraid of those who kill the body, and after this can do nothing more; but I will instruct you whom to fear: fear Him who, after having killed, hath power to cast into hell.”

This passage continues, like that in Matthew, “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?” &c.

The first part of this passage, it is evident from the turns of expression and from its connection with what follows, was intended to be a report of the same words of Jesus which are given by Matthew. There seems no ground for doubt, that their true sense and proper bearing appear in Matthew; but, if this be so, their meaning was misapprehended by Luke. This may have arisen from the circumstance, that these striking words had, previously to the composition of his Gospel, been sometimes separated from their original connection, and applied to the subject of hypocrisy, to which they so well admit of being accommodated.

The following is another example of the same kind:—

In Matthew, we find these words in the Sermon on the Mount:†—

“Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother has a charge against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go away; first reconcile thy brother to thee, and then come and offer thy gift. Show thy good-will

\* Luke viii. 16-18.

† Matt. v. 23-26.

towards him who has this charge against thee,\* quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him;† lest he bring thee before the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Truly, I say to thee, thou wilt not come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

This is the conclusion of a passage in which our Saviour warns his followers, in the most solemn manner, against being angry without cause, and expressing ill-will to others even by injurious language. The words which immediately precede are these: "Whoever shall call his brother a reprobate shall be punishable by the fire of hell." It was common among the Jews to represent a sin or an injury under the figure of a debt; and the whole passage, therefore, is closely connected. He who has injured his brother is directed not even to worship God till he has effected a reconciliation. He is to show his good-will toward him quickly, lest he should be called to suffer the full punishment of his offence.

In Luke, the last part of the passage under consideration appears in quite another connection, and with a different meaning.†

"Hypocrites! Ye can judge correctly of the appearances of the earth and sky: how is it that ye do not judge correctly of the present time? Why, even from yourselves, do you not decide on what is right? For, as thou art going with thy adversary to the magistrate, strive on the way that he may let thee go free, lest he drag thee before the judge, and the judge deliver thee over to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, that thou wilt not come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

Here our Saviour is represented as reproaching the bigoted Jews for their blindness to the character of the times, by which

\* The word translated "adversary," in the Common Version, properly means adversary in a suit at law; and the person here intended by the term is the same as "thy brother who has a charge against thee"

† The conception appears to be of the person who has injured his brother, meeting him in the public way, as he himself, having left the altar, is seeking him. The words, however, may be understood as they are by Luke,— "Whilst thou art on the way with him," that is, to the judge; the literal meaning being, "before thou art called to account for thy sin against him."

‡ Luke xii. 56-59.



is meant, to those proofs of a divine interposition which his ministry was continually affording. Even if these proofs were less striking, they might judge from themselves what it was right for them to do; which was to secure the favor of God, and to obtain from him pardon of their sins by reformation. Otherwise, they would be acting as one who should make no effort to propitiate his creditor (as he might do), and who, in consequence, should be condemned to imprisonment till the full amount of his debt was paid; that is, they would remain exposed to the full punishment of their sins. The figurative language here used is illustrated by that of the parable\* concerning the servant, to whom his master first forgave a debt, and afterward enforced its payment, on account of the cruelty of that servant toward one of his fellows. "And his master, being angry with him, delivered him to the executioners of the law, till he should pay all that he owed."

It is true, that Jesus may have used the same or similar words and figures in different senses on different occasions. But, as regards this passage in Luke, there is not merely the fact, that the words are found in Matthew with another connection and meaning; but the obscurity of the passage itself, the want of obvious adaptation of one part to another, and the difficulty in discovering the relations of the ideas, serve to show, that expressions have been brought together which were not originally connected.

II. Luke's Gospel presents cases of another kind, in which, though the meaning of the words of our Saviour is not changed essentially, or perhaps not at all, yet, through some leading association in the mind of the evangelist, they are brought together in a new connection, and applied to a subject to which they did not primarily relate. Thus, after the appointment of the apostles, Matthew represents their Master as giving them directions appropriate to their peculiar duties. For these, Luke has substituted a series of more general declarations and precepts, taken principally from the Sermon on the Mount. Yet it will be perceived by one who reads his collection attentively, that he had, through-

\* Matt. xviii. 23-35.

out, the peculiar case of the apostles in his mind, and regarded the words which he has given as specifically referring to them. In this respect, the discourse has the character which is shown in the first words of it, as compared with those in Matthew. Instead of "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Luke gives, as a direct address to the apostles, "Blessed are ye poor."

From inattention to this circumstance, there has been supposed to be a want of connection in the discourse, which does not appear when it is viewed under its proper aspect. This may be illustrated in that portion of it which has been regarded as least coherent.

After inculcating virtues which were peculiarly required in the apostles,—love of enemies, irrisistance to injury, disregard of their private rights, universal benevolence and kindness, freedom from hasty judgment, and the doing good to others in full measure,—the discourse thus proceeds to enforce the necessity of their rightly apprehending and fully performing their own duty in order to qualify them to be teachers of others.\*

"Then he spoke to them in a figure:—Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a ditch?† A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one properly prepared will be as his teacher.‡ Why dost thou look at the straw in thy brother's eye, and not consider the beam in thine own eye? Or how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me take out the straw which is in thine eye, whilst thou perceivest not the beam which is in thine own eye? Hypocrite! first put the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou wilt see clearly to take the straw out of thy brother's eye.§ No good tree produces bad fruit, nor does a bad tree produce good fruit; for every tree is known by its fruit, Men do not gather figs from thorns, nor grapes from a bramble.|| The good man, out of the good storehouse of his

\* Luke vi. 39-45.

† See Matt. xv. 14; whence it appears that this language was used by Jesus concerning the *false teaching* of the Pharisees.

‡ Comp. Matt. x. 24; John xiii. 16 and xv. 20.

§ Comp. Matt. vii. 3-5.

|| See Matt. vii. 16-18, where this figurative language is connected with the direction to "beware of *false teachers*;" and Matt. xii. 33, where Jesus demands that the test here given should be applied to his own teaching and character.

mind, produces what is good; and the bad man, out of the bad storehouse of his mind, produces what is bad: for the mouth speaks from the fulness of the mind.”\*

These sayings are all connected together, and connected with the rest of the discourse, as all relating to the character required in a moral and religious teacher. That the tone which runs through them is not altogether what we might expect in an address of Jesus to his apostles, is to be accounted for by the fact, that their original reference was different from what is here assigned them. Their application, likewise, is to be conceived of as hypothetical, not direct; as pointed against faults of character which the apostles were to avoid, not which they were supposed to have.

With one exception, these sayings, though their reference is changed, retain their original meaning. The exception to which I refer is in the words, “A disciple is not above his teacher; but every one properly prepared will be as his teacher;” the meaning of which, in their present connection, is, that he will be as his teacher in ability to communicate instruction: but this is not the sense of the corresponding passages of Matthew and John, which have been noted in the margin. There the meaning is, that the apostles must not expect to be better treated than their Master, and must be as ready to humble themselves as he was.

III. Occasionally, St. Luke, after giving the words of our Saviour on some particular occasion, seems to have subjoined other words, uttered by him at a different time, as a sort of commentary on what he then said, or on the incident related, without intending that the latter words should be conjoined with the preceding as forming one discourse, but also without sufficiently discriminating them; so that a degree of confusion and obscurity is produced.

Thus, the parable of the dishonest steward † is concluded with exhortations to the proper use of riches, ending with the declaration, “Ye cannot be servants of God and of Mammon.” After which, the narrative of Luke thus proceeds: ‡—

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\* Comp. Matt. xii. 34, 35. † Luke xvi. 1-13. ‡ Luke xvi. 14-18.

“And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and scoffed at him. And he said to them, Ye make yourselves appear righteous in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly exalted among men is an abomination before God.

“The Law and the Prophets were till John. Since then the kingdom of God has been announced, and every one is forcing into it. But heaven and earth may pass away more easily than one tittle fall from the Law.

“Whoever puts away his wife, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries her who was put away commits adultery.”

After this follows the parable of Dives and Lazarus.

Here, at first view, no connection appears; but the train of thought admits of an explanation upon the principle just stated.

St. Luke having recorded the declaration of Jesus, that the Pharisees, who were highly exalted among men, were an abomination before God, his thoughts turned to that part of their character on which they particularly prided themselves,—their strict observance of the Law, that is, the ceremonies and rites of the Law; and this led him to insert those words of his Master which announced that these ceremonies and rites were abolished by Christianity, that they were virtually abrogated when John proclaimed the kingdom of heaven. But with these words, as uttered by Jesus, was connected an incidental or parenthetical remark, which is thus given by Matthew: \* “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven is forcing its way, *and the violent are seizing upon it.*” I refer to the last words, which are thus expressed by Luke: “and every one is forcing into it.” In these words I suppose Jesus to have referred to those many Jews, who, possessed with false notions of the character of the Messiah, as a deliverer from the tyranny of the Romans, and ready for deeds of violence, were eager to enlist as his followers, striving to force themselves upon him without any of the dispositions which he required in his disciples. The words in question, as given by Luke, are out of place, and

\* Matt. xi. 12.

appear only in consequence of their original connection with those which precede.

But, having introduced this mention of the abolition of the ritual Law, Luke proceeds to limit the language in which it is expressed, by another declaration of our Lord: "Heaven and earth may pass away more easily than one tittle fall from the Law." "The Law" is a term used in the New Testament in various senses, and with a very different force and bearing in different connections. In the mouth of a Jew, it denoted, in one of its meanings, the whole of religion as understood by him. The Law, or the Law of God,—for the terms were equivalent,—was his religion. In this sense the expression might be "the Law" simply, or "the Law and the Prophets." By our Saviour, either term was used in an analogous sense, to denote those essential truths of religion and morality, which alone constitute the Old Testament, or any part of it, a book of religious instruction, and entitle it to be called by the name of "the Law." These, the true Law of God, could never be abrogated. Heaven and earth might pass away, but they would remain unchangeable. Using the term in this meaning, he declares, "that to do to others as we would that they should do to us is the Law and the Prophets,"—that is, a summary of all the social duties taught by them; and, elsewhere, that the whole Law and the Prophets depend on love to God and love to man. This was the Law from which not the smallest letter nor tittle could pass away; and this Law the Pharisees, instead of observing, were continually violating, and were thus an abomination before God.

The passage respecting divorce is introduced with reference to the sanction which the Pharisees gave to the greatest license, in this respect, on the part of the husband. No instance, perhaps, could have been chosen which would have presented in stronger contrast their avowed morality with the morality taught by Christ.

The parable of Dives and Lazarus has no relation to the Pharisees; for, considering their austerity of manners, Jesus could not have typified them by one who "feasted sumptuously every day." It was suggested to the recollection of the evangelist by the discourse of our Saviour respecting the use and misuse of wealth, which gave occasion to all on which we have been remarking.

IV. In other instances, -St. Luke has given fragments of what was said by our Saviour at a particular time, omitting the connecting and explanatory passages: so that, though the sense of every part might be clear to his own mind, or to the minds of those possessed of the information current among the first Christians, yet it is not, at the present day, discernible from his Gospel alone; and we learn it only by a comparison of his accounts with those of Matthew.

Matthew has preserved the striking and appropriate discourse delivered by Jesus, when, after his curing a demoniac, the Pharisees said, "This man casts out demons only through Beelzebub, the prince of demons."\* In immediate connection, the evangelist proceeds thus: † "Then some of the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees spoke, saying, Teacher, we wish to see a sign from thee. But he answered them, A wicked and apostate race would have a sign; but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet." Jesus then speaks in strong figurative language of the depravity and indocility of the race with whom he had to do, concluding thus: ‡ —

"When an unclean spirit has gone out of a man, it passes through desert places in search of rest, and finds it not. Then it says, I will return to my house whence I came out; and, upon returning, it finds the house unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits worse than itself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So will it be with this evil race."

The evil race spoken of was the great body of the Jews. The nation is compared to an incurable madman, who, after an interval of quiet, relapses into more violent insanity. The figure was suggested by the cure of the demoniac, which gave occasion to the discourse. To understand its application, we must consider, that the Jews, since their return from the Babylonish captivity, had not fallen into idolatry, and did not regard themselves as exposed to punishment from God. They thought themselves much better than their countrymen of former times. They said, "If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have

\* See Matt. xii. 22-27. † Matt. xii. 28, seqq. ‡ Matt. xii. 43-45.

been partners with them in slaying the prophets."\* But they hated, and were about to cause the death of, Jesus, the greatest of God's messengers to their nation, and to display their enmity toward his disciples, as their fathers had persecuted and put to death their religious teachers. They were about to manifest, in a manner still more outrageous, the same disobedience which their predecessors had shown. The interval of seeming amendment in the nation was no real change for the better. The evil spirit had returned, and found his house prepared for his reception, and entered in with seven other spirits worse than himself.

In Luke, the passage remarked upon appears almost in the same words.† But, after giving a portion of our Saviour's first reply to the Pharisees, he immediately subjoins this passage, separated from its proper connection, and without any thing to explain it; for even the last sentence, "So will it be with this evil race," is omitted. It would be impossible, from Luke's Gospel alone, to determine its reference and ultimate meaning.

V. In one instance, a portion of the Sermon on the Mount, we have found a discourse of Jesus referred by Luke to an occasion on which it was not delivered. Another striking example of the same kind occurs, I believe, in the discourse consisting of a series of denunciations against the Pharisees. This has the appearance of having been one of the last and most solemn acts of the ministry of Jesus. It is represented by Matthew as having been delivered by him at Jerusalem, only two days before his death, in the temple, which he had then entered for the last time, amid a concourse of people, among whom many of the Pharisees were standing as listeners. According to Matthew, he concluded it thus:‡—

"Jerusalem! Jerusalem! who killest the teachers and stonest those who are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a bird gathers her young under her wings; and ye would not! Behold! your house is left you deserted. For I declare to you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord.

"And Jesus went out, and left the temple."

\* Matt. xxiii. 30.

† Luke xi. 24-26.

‡ See Matt. xxiii. 13-39.

The words of Jesus, just quoted, are misplaced by Luke, and their meaning obscured in consequence.\* It is obvious what a most striking conclusion they form to the discourse, if we regard it as it appears in Matthew.

Till his business on earth drew towards its accomplishment, it would not have been the part of wisdom in Jesus to exasperate to the uttermost the passions of the Pharisees, especially under circumstances which put his life in their power. Nor till his apostles and other followers had been formed to their duties, as far as might be, by his personal influence, would it have been prudent to place them in such open and irreconcilable opposition to those whose sanctity, and whose authority as religious teachers, had been so revered by their countrymen. But the deadly hatred of the Pharisees was no longer to be avoided: it was to be encountered; and his followers had received, and were just about to receive in his resurrection from the dead, evidence which could leave no doubt in their minds of his divine mission. Accordingly, though in Matthew's account of the preaching of Jesus we find previously strong expressions of censure upon the Pharisees or upon some of their number, yet there is nothing at once so plain and unreserved in its meaning, so direct and general in its application, so terrible in its reproaches and denunciations, and pronounced so formally and solemnly to a public assembly representing the whole Jewish nation. Every thing now conspired to give weight to his words. The utterance of them appears not as an incidental act of his ministry, but as purposed beforehand, as a main object of it; as a testimony delivered in the name of God, not against the character of the Pharisees alone, but against hypocrisy and bigotry, whatever forms they might assume.

All, therefore, according to the narrative of Matthew, is consistent. But Luke represents a considerable part of this discourse against the Pharisees as having been uttered somewhere at a distance from Jerusalem, at a private house, — the house of a Pharisee, who had, at least with a show of hospitality, invited Jesus as a guest.† The occasion, likewise, assigned by Luke, does not seem such as the discourse required. The evangelist

\* See Luke xiii. 34, 35.

† Luke xi. 37-52.



says: "Now, while he was teaching, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him. And he entered, and placed himself at table. But the Pharisee wondered, when he saw that he did not wash his hands before dinner [conformably to a ceremony of the Jews, to which they attached great importance]. But the Lord said to him, Now, you Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and dish, but ye are full within of rapacity and wickedness." And then follows, with some variation in the report, a great part of the discourse which is given by Matthew as delivered in the temple at Jerusalem. The misplacing of this discourse by Luke may be accounted for by the supposition, that Jesus did, on the occasion to which this evangelist has referred it, make some comments on the superstitious observances of the Pharisees, and speak of their worthlessness, contrasting it with the importance of justice, mercy, and truth.

VI. One other characteristic of Luke's Gospel remains to be mentioned. He gives different discourses of Jesus, with so slight a form of transition from one to another, or perhaps without any, that they all appear, at first view, either to form but one discourse, or to have been delivered consecutively. Some discourses of our Lord, we may suppose, had been blended together in the oral teaching of the apostles, as relating to the same subject, or as illustrating each other; and some may have been narrated without mention of the occasion on which they were delivered, this occasion not being of particular interest. As Luke was unacquainted with the chronological order and original relation of these discourses, he has collected and placed them miscellaneously, without carefully separating one from another. An example of this is furnished by that portion of his Gospel which begins with the fourteenth verse of the eleventh chapter, and ends with the ninth verse of the thirteenth chapter.

This view of the formation and character of Luke's Gospel may assist us in understanding it, and solve some difficulties with which we might otherwise be embarrassed. But the consideration of the phenomena that have been pointed out leads to a further conclusion. It is difficult to state them without implying the circumstances in which they had their origin. They are

accounted for at once, if we suppose that the apostles, regarding the words of their Master as embodying the truths of his religion, were accustomed to bring them together in different forms, to apply them on various occasions, and sometimes to change their original sense, and adapt striking expressions to a new subject; and that, such being the case, they were collected and arranged by one who, like St. Luke, was not personally conversant with Jesus, but derived his information from the preaching and conversation of his immediate followers. This solution explains all the appearances presented, and I know of no other which will explain them. But this solution rests on the belief, that the words recorded in the first three Gospels were uttered by Jesus

## SECTION VII.

### *Concluding Remarks.*

It has been my purpose to show, that, when we consider the agreements and differences among the first three Gospels, we find their character to be such as cannot be accounted for by the supposition, that the evangelists copied either one from another, or all from common written documents. Some common archetype, however, they must have had: the corresponding passages which we find in them, if they did not previously exist in a determinate written form, must have existed orally in forms nearly resembling those which they now present; and this supposition of a model, partly fixed by a regard to truth and by frequent repetition, and partly fluctuating through the changes of oral narration, is the only one that accounts satisfactorily for the phenomena presented.

But the narratives which the evangelists have thus transmitted to us were the original accounts of the apostles and first preachers of Christianity. This appears from the accordance of the Gospels with each other in the view which they present of the marvellous character and ministry of Christ. Accounts so wonderful, especially if one fancy them unfounded in truth, would have been distorted in many different ways, with or without some dishonest purpose, if abandoned to oral tradition, floating through different countries, and received and transmitted by thousands of new

converts. We cannot suppose, that, after the apostolic age, three unconnected writers, founding their narratives upon oral accounts alone, would have harmonized together as do the three evangelists.\* The agreement and difference among these Gospels present a very extraordinary, or rather a unique, phenomenon, which requires a peculiar cause for its solution; and this cause is, I think, to be found only in the fact, that they were all based upon unwritten narratives, which had, as yet, lost nothing of their original character; and which, therefore, were the narratives, true or false, of the first preachers of the religion.

In reading those Gospels, therefore, we are, in effect, listening to the very words of the apostles; we are, if I may so speak, introduced into their presence, to receive their testimony concerning deeds and words which they affirm that they saw and heard, and miracles of such a character, that it would be idle to suppose them deceived or mistaken in their reports. The question, then, concerning the truth of Christianity, under this aspect of its evidences, lies within a narrow compass. Realize, as far as you can, the characters and circumstances of the apostles; place yourselves, in imagination, in their presence; attend to their testimony; and search for every motive and feeling that might lead them, all in common, at the hazard of every worldly good, to persist in asserting the truth of stories which they knew, and thousands of their hearers knew, and all might know, to be false. Just so far as any probable motive may be assigned for such conduct, just so far, and no further, may the truth of Christianity be rendered doubtful.

Thus, if we have reasoned rightly, an inquiry which might, at first view, seem to many a matter of curiosity rather than of great interest, has led us to some important conclusions; among which the most remarkable is, that the very structure of the first three Gospels affords, when they are compared together, proof of the history they contain, and, consequently, of the miraculous origin of our religion. Such a result from a proper examination, and a correct view, of the very peculiar phenomena of those Gospels, was perhaps to be expected.

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\* See before, p. 98, seqq.

Whether we regard the history of Christ as true or false, there can be no question, that the establishment of Christianity is the most memorable event in the history of our race, that which has produced the greatest and most permanent effects upon the character and condition of men. To produce such results, some most extraordinary cause or causes must have been in operation. But if the account of those causes which we, as Christians, receive, be not true, the whole early history of Christianity will assume a new aspect. Imagine fraud, enthusiasm, mistake, singular combinations of circumstances, — all or any thing that can be moulded into a plausible scheme to account for the origin and rapid progress of our religion; still, if it was not, as represented, a religion from God, established by miraculous proof, all its original bearings upon every individual, and every subject with which it had relation, must have been essentially different from what we conceive them to have been. As we suppose the religion true or false, we are obliged to suppose causes in action of the most opposite character, — the power of God in one case, and fraud and delusion, or error, of whatever kind it may be fancied, in the other. But those causes by which Christianity was established, let us suppose them what we will, must have stamped their own character ineffaceably upon whatever was subjected to their operation. If Christianity were false, we should find clear marks of falsehood in the history of Jesus; in the conduct, preaching, and writings of those teachers who immediately succeeded him; in the accounts of its propagation; in the direct and indirect notices of its early converts; in its real or pretended bearings upon the history of the times; and especially in its doctrines and morals. We should distinguish, at first sight, such an attempt to counterfeit the power and wisdom of God. But truth is always consistent, and discovers itself in all its aspects and connections; and hence it is, that we can investigate scarcely any subject relating to the early history of our religion, without some new confirmation of our faith. Though many parts of this history are lost, yet many remain, spread over a wide field, so that we may pursue our inquiries through various and very different paths, all terminating in the same conclusion, — the divine origin of Christianity.

## NOTE C.

(See p. 142.)

## ON THE WRITINGS ASCRIBED TO APOSTOLICAL FATHERS.

## SECTION I.

*Purpose of this Note.*

THE purpose of this note is to give some account of the "Writings of the Apostolical Fathers," so called, and, on the one hand, to explain why I have not referred to them as affording proof of the genuineness of the Gospels, and, on the other hand, to show that they do not, as has been pretended,\* furnish any evidence that other gospels were in common use before those which we now possess.

They are called Writings of Apostolical Fathers because they are, or have been supposed to be, writings of individuals who were conversant with some one or more of the apostles. I limit the term in the following remarks to those about the genuineness, or very early date, of which any controversy may be supposed to remain; and, in treating this subject, I am compelled, as will be perceived, to differ from Lardner, a writer never to be spoken of without respect, and consequently from Paley, who follows him, in my views of the works themselves, and of their importance as regards our general subject.

Though these writings have been considered as among the earliest memorials of Christianity, yet it is remarkable how unsettled are the questions concerning their genuineness, antiquity, and value, and how little they have been attended to by many of those who seemed particularly called upon to investigate the subject. The few remarks that Lardner has made concerning the authority

\* Eichhorn's *Einleit. in d. N.T.*, i. 113-140. See before, pp. 61, 62.

of those which he quotes in proof of the credibility of the Gospels are far from being satisfactory; and the same may be said, on the other hand, of the observations of Priestley in his "History of Early Opinions," by which he would invalidate their authority. The German theologian Semler, dogmatizing, as usual, without assigning reasons for his opinion, pronounces them all spurious, or of doubtful credit.\* Little is to be learnt from the late ecclesiastical histories of Neander and Gieseler. Olshausen, a modern German writer of reputation, in his work on the genuineness of the Gospels, declines discussing the genuineness of the writings in question, as having no bearing on his main inquiry; but affirms them all, except "The Second Epistle of Clement," so called, to be among the oldest Christian writings extant.† And some other modern German theologians quote them almost indiscriminately, as if they were works of established authority.

But, notwithstanding the apparently unsettled state of opinion respecting these writings, I think we may arrive at some definite and satisfactory conclusions concerning them. ‡

## SECTION II.

### *The Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians. Another Epistle ascribed to Clement.*

The first work we shall notice is the Epistle of Clement of Rome, written in the name of the church at Rome, where he was bishop or presiding officer, or perhaps only a distinguished presbyter, to the church at Corinth, upon occasion of some dissensions which there prevailed. Only a single manuscript copy of the work is extant, at the end of the Alexandrine manuscript of the Scrip-

\* Comment. Historici de Antiquo Christianorum Statu, tom. i. pp. 39, 40.

† Die Echtheit der vier canonischen Evangelien erwiesen, p. 411.

‡ A translation of the writings in question was published by Archbishop Wake, in 1693, under the title of "The Genuine Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers," &c. with a preliminary discourse. It has since been several times reprinted; one edition having appeared at New York in 1810. But the work is poorly executed. The preliminary discourse is deficient in good sense, and the translations in correctness and in appropriateness of language.

tures. This copy is considerably mutilated; in some passages the text is manifestly corrupt, and other passages have been suspected of being interpolations.

The evidence for the genuineness of this Epistle—that is, for the fact, that the Epistle, as now extant, was in the main written by Clement—seems to be full and satisfactory.

Irenæus, appealing to the doctrines of Clement, as opposed to those of the Gnostics, says that Clement had seen the apostles, and had been connected with them, and that, when he became bishop, their preaching was still sounding in men's ears, and many were living who had been taught by them; and then proceeds to allege the Epistle in question, describing it as written by the church of Rome to that of Corinth, and giving a general account of its character.\*

Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth about the year 170, wrote seven Epistles, now lost, to different churches. One of these was addressed to the church at Rome, in which he said to them, as he is quoted by Eusebius, "To-day is the Lord's day, in which we have publicly read your Epistle; the reading of which, as well as of that formerly written from you by Clement, will be to us a constant source of instruction."†

The Epistle is abundantly quoted, as the work of Clement of Rome, by Clement of Alexandria. It is mentioned several times, with high praise, by Eusebius, who says that its genuineness was unquestioned; and that it had been formerly, and was even in his day, publicly read in many churches.‡ Photius, in the ninth century, gives a particular criticism upon it; and, before his time, there is no doubt that our present manuscript copy was written.§

Though the sentiments of this Epistle are commendable, it appears to be the work of an author of very moderate ability. There are no expressions of personal feeling to give it life and interest. It has the air of a homily addressed to the Corinthians on general topics, such as humility, order, peace, freedom from

\* *Contra Hæres.*, lib. iii. c. 3, § 3, p. 176.

† *Apud Euseb. Hist. Eccles.*, lib. iv. c. 23.

‡ *Hist. Eccles.*, lib. iii. c. 16 et c. 38.

§ For a full account of the authorities in proof of the genuineness of this Epistle, see the *Veterum Testimonia*, in the edition of the *Patres Apostolici* by Cotelier and Le Clerc, tom. i. pp. 128–132.

envy and angry passions, repentance, and Christian charity, which were adapted to the state of things existing among them. Its antiquity, and the circumstances attending its composition, were probably the principal causes of the notoriety and favor it obtained.

There seems no reason for questioning, that it was written by a person named Clement, who held a place in the church at Rome, which afterwards caused him to be entitled bishop, and who had been conversant with apostles. He was supposed by some of the ancients to be the Clement mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians (iv. 3) as a fellow-laborer with him; but this is doubtful. Of the bearing of this work on the evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels, I shall speak hereafter.

There was another work, of which a fragment only is extant, that in the fourth century was by some ascribed to Clement, and called his "Second Epistle to the Corinthians." At the present day, it is generally agreed that it was not written by him. It is first mentioned by Eusebius, who does not regard it as Clement's work, and says that it was quoted by no ancient writer.\* It was evidently a work of very little note or credit; and there is no ground for supposing it to have been in existence much before the time when Eusebius mentions it. Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth about the year 170, speaks of *the* Epistle of Clement to the Christians of that city in such a manner as distinctly proves that he knew nothing of any second epistle.

Eichhorn, in endeavoring to prove that the apostolical fathers had gospels different from the four Gospels, makes much use of this fragment; though he does not maintain, that the work, of which it was a part, was written by Clement, nor adduce any argument to show that it was written before the end of the second century.† It contains various quotations of words of Christ, most of which there is no difficulty in supposing to be cited, strictly or loosely, from our present Gospels. But, in one place, Peter is represented as interposing a question not mentioned in the Gospels; and, in another, a passage is quoted from an apocryphal book, called the Gospel of the Egyptians, of which I have elsewhere given an account.‡

\* Hist. Eccles., lib. iii. c. 38. † Einleit. in d. N.T., i. 122-131.

‡ In part iii. chap. viii. of this work.



The quotation of an apocryphal book by an early Christian writer, or his introducing a relation of something concerning the history of Christ not found in the Gospels, has no bearing to prove that the Gospels were not regarded by his contemporaries and by himself with the highest respect as *the* authentic histories of Jesus. We find such passages after the period when there is no question that the Gospels were so esteemed. But, in respect to the particular case before us, it is an obvious oversight to attempt to prove that the apostolical fathers used, not our present Gospels, but apocryphal gospels, from a work which it is not pretended was written by an apostolical father, and for the existence of which we have no proof before the fourth century.

### SECTION III.

#### *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians.*

What may next be mentioned is an Epistle by Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, to the church at Philippi. A portion of it only is extant in Greek: the remainder is furnished by an old Latin translation. Polycarp died a martyr in the second century. Respecting the precise time of his death, the data are, I think, too uncertain to afford ground for any of the different computations which have been made. Irenæus twice mentions having known him when he himself was a young man. He speaks of his distinct recollection of his person, his manners, his way of life, and of his public discourses, in which Polycarp, he says, reported the words of John and of other hearers of the Lord with whom he had been conversant, and their accounts respecting the miracles and doctrine of the Lord, all corresponding to the Scriptures. Irenæus relates that he suffered martyrdom when a very old man. To his Epistle to the Philippians he refers, in connection with his reference to that of Clement of Rome, as giving proof of the opposition between the doctrine of Polycarp and that of the heretics.\*

This Epistle is mentioned by other ancient writers, nor is there

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\* *Contra Hæres.*, lib. iii. c. 8, § 4. *Epist. ad Florinum*, s. p. Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.*, lib. v. c. 20.

any reason to doubt its genuineness ; except that a passage appears to have been interpolated near its conclusion, inconsistent with what is found in the preceding part of the Epistle, and fraudulently intended to give countenance to certain Epistles forged in the name of Ignatius, to be mentioned hereafter.\*

The Epistle of Polycarp is a general exhortation to Christian duties. It does not appear to have had any specific purpose, but to have been occasioned by a request of the Philippians that he would write to them, — a request which not improbably had its origin merely in their respect for his age and eminence. It is founded on the writings of the New Testament, and pervaded with conceptions, turns of expression, and quotations, borrowed from them. I shall speak of it again in connection with the Epistle of Clement.

#### SECTION IV.

##### *The Shepherd of Hermas.*

There is a work called “The Shepherd of Hermas,” which has been regarded by some as the production of a fanatic, who imagined that he saw visions, or of an impostor, pretending to have

\* The passage referred to is what is now numbered as the thirteenth section. In this, epistles of Ignatius are mentioned as sent by Polycarp to the Philippians, annexed to his own.

In the body of the Epistle (§ 9), Polycarp says to the Philippians, “I exhort you all to obey the doctrine of righteousness, and to exercise all patience, such as ye saw before your eyes, not only in those blessed men, Ignatius and Zosimus and Rufus, but also in others who were of your number, and in Paul himself, and the rest of the apostles; being persuaded that they all ran not in vain, but in faith and righteousness, and that they are with the Lord, with whom they were fellow-sufferers, in the place that was due to them.”

When this passage was written, it is evident that Ignatius was dead; nor is his death spoken of as if it were a recent event. But the author of the interpolation, overlooking this passage, and referring to the story, that Ignatius, after leaving Smyrna, passed through Philippi on his way to suffer martyrdom at Rome, makes Polycarp request the Philippians to communicate to him any certain information they might have concerning Ignatius himself, and those who were with him: “Et de ipso Ignatio, et de his qui cum eo sunt, quod certius agnoveritis significate.”

seen them. But I discern in the book no marks of fanaticism or imposture. It seems to me to belong to the same class of writings as "The Tablet of Cebes," "The Vision concerning Piers Ploughman," or, to take a more familiar example, Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," or, more generally, to the class of works of fiction, especially those written in the first person. The author, like Bunyan, describes himself as having witnessed a succession of visions, and also as having received various communications, which he was commanded to publish. His representing an angel as having appeared to him under the likeness of a shepherd gives its title to the work. Its allegories are not suited to the taste of modern times, but were adapted to engage the attention, and affect the minds, of readers in the age when it was composed.

By some, both in ancient and modern times, the writer has been supposed to be the Hermas mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, chap. xvi. 14.

This book, for a considerable period, obtained great favor and authority with many in ancient times. It was especially acceptable to the fathers of the Alexandrine school. It is once quoted by Irenæus. Clement of Alexandria often quotes it as a book of high authority. Origen, in one place, says that he thinks it was the work of the Hermas mentioned by St. Paul, that it seems to him a very useful writing, and that he thinks it divinely inspired. Elsewhere he quotes it often, but sometimes with such qualifying expressions as "if that writing is to be received." Once he mentions it as "despised by some;" and once, in citing it, he speaks of "venturing to use a certain book, which circulates in the churches, but is not acknowledged as divine by all."

Tertullian once notices the book slightly before he became a Montanist; afterwards he speaks of it with reprobation, because it contradicted the severe doctrine, which he then held, that there was no repentance for Christians guilty of unchastity. Yet, even in expressing his own ill opinion of it, he implies that it had been regarded by some as having a claim to canonical authority. I would give up the point, he says, "if that writing, the Shepherd, deserved to be inserted in the divine *Document*" (that is, among the books of Scripture); "if it had not been judged by every council, even of *your* churches" (those of the catholic Christians, in contradistinction to the Montanists), "as apocryphal and false."

Eusebius speaks of it as reported to be the work of the Hermas mentioned by St. Paul. He reckons it among those writings which were "not genuine" Scripture (*ἐν τοῖς νόθοις*); but says, that it was "judged by some a very necessary book, especially for those who are in want of elementary instruction, so that at the present day, as we know, it is even publicly read in churches, and I have observed that some very ancient writers make use of it."\*

There is perhaps nothing in the contents of the book inconsistent with the belief of its having been written in the first century; but there is evidence to the contrary which can hardly be set aside. It is mentioned in the fragment of an account of canonical and uncanonical books, or "Canon," as it may be called, found by Muratori in a manuscript of the Ambrosian Library at Milan, and published by him in 1740, in his "*Antiquitates Italicæ Medii Ævi.*"† The author of this Canon says of it, that "it was written very lately, in our own times, by Hermas, while his brother Pius presided over the church at Rome as bishop; and so it ought to be read, but not publicly in the church to the people;" adding, that it could not be ranked among the writings either of the prophets or of the apostles.‡ The date that has been assigned for the death of Pius is the year 142. The same account of the authorship of the book is given in a Latin poem, "*Against Marcion*," of uncertain age and by an unknown writer, published in editions of the works of Tertullian. In this, Hermas, the brother of Pius, is called the Angelical Shepherd, who spoke the words committed to him.§ This opinion respecting the author of the Shepherd seems to have prevailed, after the fifth century, among the writers of the Latin Church. The book gradually fell into neglect; the original was lost; and only a few manuscripts of a Latin translation of it are now remaining.

\* For the references to the passages above quoted, see the *Veterum Testimonia* in the *Patres Apostolici*, or in *Fabricii Cod. Apocr. Nov. Test.*, pars iii. pp 738-763.

† Vol. iii. pp. 853, 854.

‡ It should be observed, that the volume of Lardner's "*Credibility*" which contains the article on Hermas appeared before Muratori published this Canon.

§ Lib. iii. *ad finem*; Tertullian Opp., p. 685, ed. Priorii

The writer of the Canon published by Muratori speaks of himself as having lived in the time of Pius and his brother, Hermas, and affirms that the Shepherd had been composed by the latter not long before he himself wrote. There is here no ground for the suspicion of falsehood; and there seems to be but little probability of mistake. The writer could hardly have committed so gross an error concerning a work which, according to his own account, was famous and highly esteemed by many, as to represent it to have been written by a well-known individual of his own time, when in fact it had been in existence from the first century. We may therefore conclude, that it was not written till towards the middle of the second century: and we must ascribe the acceptance which it so early found, partly to its stories and allegorical representations, — for even rude attempts in a new form of art are likely to be favorably received; partly to an opinion, suggested by the general aspect of the book, that it was divinely inspired, — for, in the first ages of Christianity, men's notions of inspiration were very vague and comprehensive; and partly to the mistake of supposing that it was written by one who lived in the times of the apostles.

The work is of some interest, from its illustrating, in a certain degree, the opinions, feelings, and taste of the early Christians. But, as regards the direct historical evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels, it is of no importance. No book is cited in it by name. There are no evident quotations from the Gospels, and nothing that one can suppose to be borrowed from any apocryphal history of Christ.

## SECTION V.

### *The Epistle of Barnabas, so called.*

There is an Epistle extant which has been ascribed to Barnabas, the companion of St. Paul. It is several times expressly quoted as his work by Clement of Alexandria, who entitles the author "Barnabas the Apostle." It is once mentioned by Origen, in his work against Celsus, under the title of the "Catholic [that is, General] Epistle of Barnabas," as containing a passage on which Celsus might have founded a charge made by him, that the apostles were "infamous men, the vilest tax-gatherers and sailors;" which charge is, as we shall see, abundantly countenanced by the pas-

sage referred to. Origen uses no expression of respect in quoting it; and his calling it the "Epistle of Barnabas" only shows that it passed under that title, and does not prove that he himself believed Barnabas to be its author. According to the Latin translations of two of his works by Rufinus, Origen has quoted this Epistle once elsewhere, and perhaps alluded to it in another passage, but still, I think, without any particular expression of respect. The Epistle is afterwards mentioned by Eusebius, who classes it among books not canonical, or not genuine Scripture (*ἐν τοῖς νόθοις*). After him, Jerome ascribes it to Barnabas, reckoning it among the Apocryphal Scriptures; that is, as is here meant by him, among writings entitled to respect, though not canonical. The book appears to be mentioned by no other writer during the first four centuries; \* but in the Apostolical Constitutions there is a passage evidently taken from it.† Though so early recommended to notice by the quotations of Clement of Alexandria as the work of Barnabas the apostle, it seems never to have obtained much favor among the great body of Christians. Clement himself, in one place, rejects a fiction found in the work, ‡ and, in another, appears unsatisfied with one of its expositions.§ He has adduced it, therefore, not as a work of conclusive authority, nor has he quoted it for historical facts, but only for expressions of sentiment and opinion. Among the great multitude of volumes which that very learned father has cited in his writings, there must have been many in regard to the authorship of which he trusted to their titles, or to very slight information; nor is it doubted, that, in doing so, he has been led into many mistakes. In assigning the present work to Barnabas, he may have been deceived by a title prefixed to some copy of it through the misjudgment of a former proprietor, or to several copies, fraudulently, to promote their sale; or it may have been written by some individual of the name of Barnabas, and Clement may have hastily concluded that the author thus named was the companion of St. Paul. In ancient times, the genuineness of books *as a matter of literary interest* was

\* See the *Veterum Testimonia*, in the *Patres Apostolici*.

† See Dallæus, *De Pseudepigraphis Apostolicis*, lib. ii. c. 4, pp. 265, 266.

‡ *Pædagog.*, ii. 10, p. 188: comp. *Epist. Barnab.*, c. 10.

§ *Stromat.*, ii. 15, p. 389.

much less carefully investigated than at the present day; and Clement was not distinguished from other ancient writers by particular attention to the subject. His authority, probably, was the principal means of procuring for the so-called "Epistle of Barnabas" the notice it afterwards obtained.

But the author of this work does not write in the name of Barnabas, nor in any way identify himself with him; and there are decisive reasons for believing Barnabas not to have been its author.\* Its most distinguishing characteristic is its being thoroughly imbued with the allegorizing spirit of the Alexandrine school, which may in some degree have recommended it to Clement. Though of a very far inferior character, it has in this respect, and in its general design, some resemblance to the Epistle to the Hebrews. The style of reasoning and interpretation is so foreign from all our present intellectual habits, that it may have been spoken of too contemptuously; but it is unquestionably the work of a writer deficient in good sense. The allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament are very forced and mean; yet after one of the poorest, in which he teaches that the number of the persons circumcised by Abraham, which he falsely supposes to have been three hundred and eighteen, was typical of the cross and of the first two Greek letters of the name of Jesus, he subjoins: "He who has implanted in us the gift of teaching knows that no one has learnt from me a more genuine doctrine. But I know that ye are worthy of it."† We can hardly suppose this to have been written by Barnabas, one high in honor among the first preachers of Christianity, the associate of St. Paul in his labors. Christianity was not established in the Gentile world by the preaching of such "genuine doctrines." The allegories in the Epistle, founded upon the Mosaic laws respecting clean and unclean food, are mixed up with strange fables respecting animals. The whole tone of it is low and trivial, expressing no warmth of feeling, and not adapted to excite any. And to mention one other particular passage, that referred to by Origen in his work

\* I should have considered the point so well settled, that Barnabas was not its author, as to render it unnecessary to enter into any argument on the subject, had I not observed that several of the modern German scholars are disposed to attribute it to him.

† Cap. 9

against Celsus, the writer, laboring after emphatic language, says that Jesus chose for his apostles men "who were sinners beyond all sin;" a declaration too foolishly extravagant for us to believe that it proceeded from a contemporary and friend of the apostles.

But it may be said, that we know too little of Barnabas personally to determine, from the inferior character of the Epistle, that it might not have been written by him. I answer, that we know much concerning him. From the few notices of him that St. Luke has given, we learn that he was greatly trusted by the apostles, and had great influence with them; that he was one of the earliest of those preachers by whom Christianity was spread through the world; that, with the exception of St. Paul, he apparently did more than any other in the accomplishment of this work; that, in the commencement of St. Paul's ministry, he was, as it were, his patron; that he was open, manly, and strong-minded, taking St. Paul and bringing him to the apostles, when the other disciples were all afraid of him, and with him maintaining the claims of the Gentiles against the prejudices of his countrymen; and that he was full of zeal and disinterestedness in the cause in which he was engaged, giving up his property to supply those who were in need, and devoting all his powers to its promotion. Considering what he was and what he effected, there can be no doubt that he comprehended and felt the essential truths of our religion, and was well able to impress them on the hearts and minds of others. When, with such a conception of him distinctly before us, we come to the reading of his pretended Epistle, it requires but little knowledge of human nature to enable us to determine that it is not his work. It may seem only to imply the ability to distinguish between the miserable composition of some Alexandrine sophist, and the words of one full of the spirit and power of Christianity. No incongruity would be more gross than to ascribe such an Epistle to St. Paul; and it seems scarcely less incongruous to ascribe it to Barnabas.

To proceed to another argument: Barnabas was a Jew by birth; but the author of the Epistle uniformly blends himself with the Gentile Christians as one of their number. It may be possible to evade the force of particular passages to this effect, one after another; but the whole impression from the manner in which he



speaks is, that he was a Gentile by birth, and, I think, a Gentile convert. In addition to this, he does not write in the Hebraistic style of the New Testament. He discovers no Jewish sentiments or affections, no interest in or sympathy with the Jewish nation. He writes of them with the harsh feelings of a Gentile. No Jew could or ought so to have alienated himself from his countrymen. Between the state of mind expressed by the writer, and the strong emotion with which St. Paul speaks of his "great grief and continual pain of heart for his brethren, his natural kinsmen," the contrast is much too striking to allow of our attributing the Epistle to Barnabas, especially when we remember that this work is imagined to have been written by him immediately after those overwhelming calamities which the Jews brought upon themselves through their unbelief.

As appears from the work itself (c. 16), it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). It cannot be proved, that, in the common course of nature, Barnabas might not have survived that event; but there is no doubt, that, if he did so, he must have been far advanced in life. That one who had composed nothing before should then set about the composition of a writing at all resembling that ascribed to Barnabas is very improbable; and still more improbable is it, that in a work addressed by Barnabas, under such circumstances, to his fellow-Christians, there should be no recurrence to his past history, no expression of those deeply affecting recollections that must have pressed upon his mind, no reference to his old age, nor any trace of emotion in contemplating the ruin which God had inflicted upon his nation, the hard but successful struggles of the true faith, and his own solitary state, as one of the few survivors of that noble company of apostles and martyrs, who had been bound together by such strong sympathies in suffering and joy. Nothing of all this appears in the Epistle. It might have been written as a task by a dull pupil in a rhetorician's school.

Barnabas, as I have said, may have survived the destruction of Jerusalem, though it is for various reasons unlikely that he did so: but, were it the fact, it would not prove that he might have been the author of the Epistle; for the Epistle was not written, as has been affirmed, *shortly* after that event. This appears from the passage in which the event is referred to; from which it also

appears, that the writer was neither Barnabas nor any other Jew. The Jewish temple having been destroyed, the author represents the Gentiles as building up in its stead a spiritual temple to God. Its destruction, he says, was predicted in the Old Testament, and "it has taken place. For, they [the Jews] going to war, it was destroyed by their enemies; and now will the very ministers of their enemies rebuild it." *The Jews going to war, it was destroyed by their enemies*, — the writer would not thus have spoken of the destruction of Jerusalem, had it been a recent event, fresh in the minds of men; nor would he, if a Jew, have classed himself, as he immediately does, with *the very ministers of the enemies* of his nation, converted Gentiles, who were to form the new temple, — "we," he says, "whose hearts, before we believed in God, were full of idolatry, a habitation of demons, but in whom God now dwells."

We conclude, then, that the Epistle was not written by Barnabas; and, this being the case, we have no ground for assigning to it an earlier date than is required by the circumstance of its being quoted by Clement of Alexandria; that is, we may suppose it to have been written about the middle of the second century. We may derive an argument for its not being in existence before this period, from the fact, that it is not noticed by Irenæus or Tertullian, the latter of whom speaks of the Epistle to the Hebrews as written by Barnabas, — calling it the "Epistle of Barnabas," — without intimating a knowledge of any other ascribed to him.\* A considerable part of the Epistle is controversial, directed against the unbelieving Jews, and having, therefore, the same character as Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho, which was written about the period just mentioned. But, from the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) till the reign of Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138-161), the state of the Jews, including the Jewish Christians, was such, that there is little likelihood that religious controversies existed between them and the Gentile Christians, or that the notice of the latter was at all directed to their pretensions. "The wrath of the Roman empire had fallen upon and blasted the nation, and continued to pursue it, as if to exterminate the race. They became objects of general aversion and hatred. As an odious

\* De Pudicitia, c. 20.

and degraded class, they were everywhere exposed to insult and cruelty. The capitation-tax, the didrachm, which they had been accustomed to pay for the service of the temple, was required by Titus, in bitter mockery, for the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. Under Domitian, the impositions upon them were made more severe by the brutality with which they were enforced, — *Præter cæteros Judaicus fiscus acerbissimè actus est*, says Suetonius; and it became a common source of revenue to charge them with crimes for the sake of seizing upon their property.\* They were forbidden by the edicts of the Roman emperors to circumcise their children. They existed throughout the empire only as suppressed rebels, often breaking out into open war, and perpetrating and suffering terrible massacres; till at last the vengeance of Adrian was directed upon Judæa, and renewed, as far as there were objects for it, the desolation of Titus. Under such circumstances, we can hardly suppose the Jews to have been so interested in the religious controversy with the Gentile Christians, as to give occasion for such works as the Dialogue with Trypho, or the Epistle of Barnabas. But under the first Antoninus, the successor of Adrian, the prohibition to circumcise their children was revoked, the wiser policy of conciliation was adopted toward them, they enjoyed a respite from their sufferings; and, as during his reign the Dialogue with Trypho was written, so also, we may suppose, was the Epistle of Barnabas.

To those who believe that the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ did not begin to prevail among the Orthodox Christians till toward the middle of the second century, its introduction into this Epistle may afford another argument for the date assigned to it.

But, whatever weight there may be in these considerations, it is to be remembered, that, if the Epistles be not the work of Barnabas, we have no ground whatever for supposing it written earlier than the period mentioned; and there is no ground, therefore, for classing it with writings of apostolical fathers. Its internal character is an objection, not merely to its having been

\* To such an extent was this practice carried, that, when it was abolished by Nerva, a coin was struck, bearing the inscription, "*Fisci Judaici Calumnia sublata S.C.*"

written by Barnabas, but by any one who had been conversant with apostles.

The Epistle is now extant, partly in the Greek original, and partly in an old Latin translation; the beginning of the former and the end of the latter being lost. The texts of both, in the few manuscripts in which they are extant, are very corrupt; and, in the forms in which they have been printed, both lie under the suspicion of having been interpolated and altered by transcribers.

The Epistle contains three passages corresponding to passages in the Gospels.\* There is one which Eichhorn thinks was taken from an apocryphal history of Christ.† It is as follows: "So they, he says, who would see me, and attain my kingdom, must receive me through affliction and suffering."‡ But there seems no difficulty in regarding this as intended to express the sense of various passages in the Gospels. There is another professed quotation, that would seem to have been more to Eichhorn's purpose, which, however, may admit of a similar explanation. "As the Son of God says, Let us resist all iniquity, and hate it."§ But, as regards both these passages, it is further to be observed, that the writer of the Epistle is extremely inaccurate in his professed quotations, so as often to cite the Old Testament for words and facts not to be found in it.|| But, as these citations do not prove that he had any other copy of the Old Testament than that in common use, so neither do the two passages in question prove that he had any other copy of the New Testament. We cannot infer from them that he quoted any apocryphal writing; and, could this be shown, it would be a fact of no moment.

## SECTION VI.

### *Epistles ascribed to Ignatius.*

We come now to seven Epistles ascribed to Ignatius, said to be a bishop of Antioch, who suffered martyrdom soon after the

\* See Lardner's article on Barnabas; Credibility, part ii. chap. i.

† Einleit. in d. N.T., i. 117, 118. ‡ Cap. 7. § Cap. 4.

|| See the examples adduced by Jones in his *New and Full Method of settling the Canonical Authority of the N.T.*, vol. ii. chap. xli.

close of the first century. These Epistles exist in two forms, in one of which they are shorter than in the other. The shorter Epistles have either been abridged from the longer, with some changes of expression, or the longer have been interpolated, and altered in other respects from the shorter. It is the genuineness of the shorter Epistles that is generally contended for by those who suppose one or the other set to have been written by Ignatius. The story connected with them is, that he was sent by the personal order of the Emperor Trajan from Antioch, by a land journey, to Rome, there to be exposed to wild beasts; and that on his way he wrote six of these Epistles to different churches, and one to Polycarp.

But the seven shorter Epistles, the genuineness of which is contended for, come to us in bad company; not only that of their seven larger brethren, but that of eight other Epistles ascribed to Ignatius, which the learned have almost unanimously pronounced to be spurious. In ancient times, supposititious works, and those of little credit, were not uncommonly refashioned, or gave occasion to others of a similar character; while the undoubted genuineness of a work prevented such changes and imitations. The name of Ignatius, it is apparent, was a favorite among the fabricators of spurious writings, probably because hardly any thing was known of him with certainty.

There is, as it seems to me, no reasonable doubt, that the seven shorter Epistles ascribed to Ignatius are, equally with all the rest, fabrications of a date long subsequent to his time. Some, who have felt the strong objections to which their genuineness is exposed, have adopted the notion of their being interpolated, or have suggested that this might be the case. But I believe, that, if there be any thing in them which Ignatius said or wrote, it is this which may be considered as interpolated, having been introduced by the author of the Epistles to give credit to his forgery. The design of this forgery appears to have been to strengthen the domination of priests, and especially of bishops; to confirm the doctrine of the deity of Christ, according to the writer's conceptions of it; and to bear down the Gnostics and other heretics, by the pretended authority of an ancient martyr.

The genuineness of these Epistles has been so ably discussed, and they have, in my opinion, been so satisfactorily proved to

be spurious, that I shall make only a few general remarks upon the subject.\*

The state of the external testimony is such as to create a strong presumption of their being fabricated. The passage near the conclusion of the Epistle of Polycarp in its Latin translation, in which epistles of Ignatius are mentioned, is of such a character as at once to raise a suspicion of its having been interpolated to countenance the fraud.† No epistles of Ignatius are mentioned by Irenæus, Clement, or Tertullian; and the absence of such mention, under the circumstances of the case, is all but decisive proof, that the seven Epistles did not exist in their day. Especially the fact, that Irenæus does insist at length upon the evidence against the doctrines of the Gnostics to be derived from the Epistles of Clement and Polycarp, without mentioning those of Ignatius, which the occasion must have forced upon his notice, and which might have seemed written expressly for his purpose, shows, either that these Epistles were not then extant, or that he did not recognize them as genuine; and of these inferences there is abundant reason to adopt the first.‡ Origen is adduced as

\* The subject is to be *studied* in the work of Daillé, “De Scriptis quæ sub Dionysii Areopagitæ et Ignatii Antiocheni Nominibus circumferuntur;” in which, however, it is to be observed, that he blends together objections both to the shorter and longer Epistles, it not being settled in his time which set was to be defended;—in Bishop Pearson’s reply to Daillé, entitled “Vindiciæ Ignatianæ;”—and in Larroque’s answer to Pearson (which I have not been able to procure), “Observationes in Ignatianas Pearsonii Vindicias, necnon in Beverigii Annotationes.” Most readers, however, will find enough to satisfy them in Chauncy’s “Complete View of Episcopacy, as exhibited from the Fathers of the Christian Church until the Close of the Second Century,”—the work of an able and learned theologian of this country, which, though the controversy that produced it is obsolete, still retains value, from the information it affords concerning Christian antiquity. It is striking, and, to a scholar, almost affecting, that such a work should have been produced among us at a time (but little more than fifty years since) when, as the author mentions, there was a want of types and skill to print the Greek citations in Greek letters.

† See before, p. 550.

‡ There is a passage in Irenæus (lib. v. c. 28, § 4), which Eusebius (H.E., iii. 36) adduces in proof of his having quoted these Epistles, and which has been insisted upon by their defenders in modern times. It is as follows: “As one among us said, when condemned to the wild beasts on

twice quoting them: but one of the quotations appealed to is in a work\* of which we have only a translation by Rufinus, who so altered and interpolated the writings of Origen which he rendered, that his translations, where a reasonable doubt may arise of the genuineness of a particular passage, are not considered as of authority to prove what Origen wrote; and the other is found in a work of which the genuineness is doubtful, a homily,† which those who contend for its genuineness suppose to have been written down by some hearer clandestinely, without Origen's consent;‡ and in the copies of which, thus particularly exposed to interpolation from not having any claim to be regarded as the precise words of the author, it may have been subsequently introduced.

But there is, after all, nothing improbable in the supposition, that some spurious epistle or epistles ascribed to Ignatius existed in the time of Origen. This may, indeed, seem more likely than that the seven contested Epistles should have been produced in a body at a later period, without any thing previously existing to suggest or to countenance their fabrication. They, as we have seen, gave occasion to fifteen spurious epistles, which followed them; and we may reasonably conjecture, that they would not, some centuries after the death of Ignatius, have been put forward as written by him, if no one had before heard of an epistle ascribed to Ignatius.

The first writer by whom the seven Epistles are expressly

account of his testimony for God, I am the grain of Christ [or God], and am ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread of God." These words are found in the Epistle to the Romans ascribed to Ignatius (§ 4). By Jerome they are said to have been spoken at the time of his martyrdom. Supposing that Irenæus referred to Ignatius, which has been assumed on the one hand, and admitted on the other, without, I think, any sufficient proof, there is no good reason for believing that he quoted the words of the Epistle. The turn of expression, on the contrary, would lead us to suppose that he referred to spoken words; and the forger of these Epistles, for the purpose of giving them credit, would naturally have recourse to the artifice of introducing into them words that had been ascribed to Ignatius, or which might be fancied to be his.

\* Prolog. in Cantic. Canticorum; Opp. iii. 80.

† Homil. in Lucam vi.; Opp. iii. 938.

‡ See Delarue's Preface to the third volume of Origen's Works, pp. iv., v.

mentioned is Eusebius; \* and by him in such a way as, I think, to leave it doubtful whether he believed their genuineness. He begins his account of the martyrdom of Ignatius with the words, "*It is reported*," † and speaks of him as "*still* very famous with many;" while, except the honorable mention of him as an example of patience in the genuine portion of the Epistle of Polycarp, his *name* does not occur in the extant writings of any preceding father, unless the passages ascribed to Origen are genuine. Eusebius was not of a character to expose himself to odium by directly expressing his disbelief of a fabrication intended to strengthen the power of the priesthood.

The story connected with the pretended composition of these Epistles is very improbable; but on this it is unnecessary to dwell. Their internal character affords, in my opinion, the clearest evidence of forgery. A series of anachronisms runs through them. They suppose a priesthood with distinctions and powers which did not exist till long after the time of Ignatius. The implicit submission of the laity to the clergy in all spiritual matters is a constant topic, and is inculcated in language foolish and extravagant even to profaneness. A single example may suffice: "Do ye all follow your bishop, as Jesus Christ did the Father, and the presbytery, as the apostles; and reverence the deacons as the command of God." ‡ To give such an exhortation to Christians at the present day would not be more absurd than it would have been to address it to those of the primitive age, when Ignatius is supposed to have lived. There is a similar anachronism in the language concerning the theological doctrine of the deity of Christ. And the repeated references to the opinions of the Docetæ imply, that those opinions had acquired a notoriety and importance about the end of the first century, which is inconsistent with the statements of the early fathers by whom they were controverted, who refer their rise to the times of Adrian and Antoninus Pius.

I doubt whether any book, in its general tone of sentiment and language, ever betrayed itself as a forgery more clearly than do these pretended Epistles of Ignatius. The style, which

\* Hist. Eccles., lib. iii. c. 36.

† *Δόχος ὅτι ἔχει.*

‡ Epist. ad Smyrnæos, § 8.



is barbarous and obscure, is, at the same time, ridiculously inflated and artificial.\* There is no natural expression of feeling. The sentiments ascribed to Ignatius present a rude caricature of a very weak, half-crazy, vain-glorious bigot. Take the conception on which the Epistles are founded, — that of an aged Christian bishop, who had been a companion of apostles, torn from his people by an order of the emperor in person, sent a long journey under a guard of brutal soldiers, to suffer, at its termination, a barbarous death, continually receiving, on his way, all the consolations and supports which the sympathy of his fellow-Christians could afford him, and addressing to them, under such circumstances, his last exhortations, — take this conception, and one can hardly imagine that the outline could be filled up, as it is by the forger of these Epistles, so that not a feeling of interest or respect should be excited for the supposed sufferer. No writer of a fustian tragedy ever more grossly misrepresented human nature, or put more extravagant rant into the mouth of his principal personage.†

I conceive these Epistles in their shorter form to have been fabricated about the beginning of the fourth century, the date

\* The following account of the star said to have appeared to the Magi may serve as an illustration of the character of the forger of these Epistles, and of his style of writing, though of this it is not the most remarkable specimen that might be given:—

“A star shone forth in the heavens, brighter than all the stars, and its light was unspeakable; and its novelty produced perturbation. And the other stars, together with the sun and moon, became a choir to that star; and that surpassed them all in its light, and there was trouble among men whence came this strange novelty. Hence all magic was dissolved, and every bond of wickedness done away, ignorance was overthrown, the old kingdom was destroyed, God being manifested in a human form for the newness of eternal life, and that which was perfected by God received dominion. Hence all things were in commotion, because the destruction of death was preparing” — *Epist. ad Ephesios*, § 19.

“*Mirum hæc potuisse videri temerè scripta, absurda, indicta,*” — “It is wonderful that this account can have appeared unfounded, absurd, unheard of.” So says Cotelier, in his note on the passage, referring to expressions of Daillé. Bishop Pearson (*Vindic. Ignat.*, pars ii. c. 10) defends it as credible; saying, that there were “two phases of the star, one in the East, and the other at Jerusalem,” and that the account refers to the former.

† See particularly the whole of the Epistle to the Romans.

assigned to them by Daillé; but it is doubtful, whether, in this form, their text remains the same as it originally appeared. They are of no value as regards the direct historical evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels. But Eichhorn, though he admits that they were not the work of Ignatius, says that "they are an ancient though much-interpolated book,"\* and insists on one passage, as proving that the apostolical fathers quoted apocryphal gospels.†

## SECTION VII.

### *Concluding Remarks respecting the Evidence for or against the Genuineness of the Gospels to be derived from the Writings before mentioned.*

From the writings ascribed to apostolical fathers, if our preceding conclusions be correct, we have to except the Second Epistle of Clement, so called, of the existence of which we have no proof before the fourth century; the Shepherd of Hermas, which was written not long before the middle of the second century; what is named the Epistle of Barnabas, which was not the work of Barnabas the apostle, and the composition of which may likewise be referred to about the middle of the second century; and the spurious Epistles of Ignatius, the fabrication of a much later age.

We have, then, remaining only the Epistle of Clement of Rome, and that of Polycarp, of which I shall speak hereafter.

The writings first mentioned are unimportant as affording direct historical evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels. Supposing the Gospels to have been in common use among Christians at the time of their composition, there can indeed be little doubt that they contain quotations from and references to them. But the Gospels are not spoken of nor described: there is nothing in the writings themselves clearly to designate the source or sources of those quotations and references; nor are the words alleged introduced under such circumstances, and so strikingly correspondent with the words of the evangelists, as to satisfy us,

\* Einleit. in d. N.T., i. 181.

† Ibid., p. 182.

from these considerations alone, that they must have been taken from the Gospels.

But it has been maintained, that these writings not only afford no proof of this fact, but that they, together with the Epistles of Clement and Polycarp, show that gospels different from those we now have were in common use among the companions and immediate successors of the apostles. Eichhorn contends, that "the apostolical fathers, from Barnabas, and Clement of Rome, down to Polycarp, used in their writings, genuine and *spurious* [that is, in those which they did and in those which they did not write], texts of the Life of Jesus in many respects different from those of our Matthew, Mark, and Luke."\* This extraordinary proposition is maintained by arguments corresponding to its character; for these arguments are founded principally on passages in works which Eichhorn does not suppose to be genuine, and which, from the very circumstance of their being spurious, we may infer could not even have been in existence during the lifetime of those to whom they are ascribed. As regards the Epistles of Clement and Polycarp, his great argument for maintaining that their authors quoted histories of Christ different from the canonical Gospels is, that words of Jesus are brought together which do not in those Gospels stand in immediate connection, and that there is sometimes a want of verbal correspondence. The force of this mode of reasoning has already been sufficiently examined. Enough, likewise, has been said respecting the theory of an Original Gospel, and of such modifications of it as the apostolical fathers are imagined to have quoted; and this theory may now be dismissed from consideration.

The Epistles of Clement and Polycarp both contain words of Jesus quoted in such a manner, and so correspondent to words reported by Matthew and Luke,† that, if taken from any book, we may, in this stage of the argument, conclude, without hesitation, that they were taken from the Gospels. But a doubt arises, whether those words might not have been received immediately by oral communication from apostles and other immediate disciples of Jesus; especially when we recollect, that Irenæus says

\* Einleit. in d. N.T., l. 114.

† See Lardner.

that he had heard Polycarp repeating the oral relations of John, and of other hearers of the Lord, concerning the doctrine and miracles of Jesus, all conformably to the Scriptures, that is, to the Gospels.† The knowledge which Polycarp derived from the hearers of our Lord, Clement may have received in the same manner; and therefore, though we may appeal to their writings as proving the authenticity of the Gospels, we cannot appeal to them as affording *direct* proof of the genuineness of the Gospels.

The manner in which the writings ascribed to apostolical fathers have been adduced in proof of the genuineness of the Gospels is the result, as it seems to me, of an imperfect view of the nature of that proof. The mode of reasoning by which we may establish the genuineness of the Gospels has been regarded as much more analogous than it is to that by which we prove historically the genuineness of other ancient books; that is to say, through the mention of their titles and authors, and quotations from and notices of them, in individual, unconnected writers. This mode of reasoning is, in its nature, satisfactory; and would be so in its application to the Gospels, if the question of their genuineness did not involve the most momentous of all questions in the history of our race, — whether Christianity be a special manifestation of God's love toward man, or only the most remarkable development of those tendencies to fanaticism which exist in human nature. Reasoning in the manner supposed, we find their genuineness unequivocally asserted by Irenæus; we may satisfy ourselves that they were received as genuine by Justin Martyr; we find the Gospels of Matthew and Mark mentioned in the beginning of the second century by Papias; and to the genuineness of St. Luke's Gospel we have his own attestation in the Acts of the Apostles. Confining ourselves to this narrow mode of proof, we arrive at what in a common case would be a satisfactory conclusion. But, when we endeavor to strengthen this evidence by appealing to the writings ascribed to apostolical fathers, we in fact weaken its force. At the very extremity of the chain of evidence, where it ought to be strongest, we are attaching defective links which will bear no weight.

\* See before, p. 549.

But the direct historical evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels, as it has been the purpose of this volume to show, is of a very different kind from what we have just been considering. It consists in the indisputable fact, that, throughout a community of millions of individuals, scattered over Europe, Asia, and Africa, the Gospels were regarded with the highest reverence as the works of those to whom they are ascribed, at so early a period that there could be no difficulty in determining whether they were genuine or not, and when every intelligent Christian must have been deeply interested to ascertain the truth. And this fact does not merely involve the testimony of the great body of Christians to the genuineness of the Gospels: it is in itself a phenomenon admitting of no explanation, except that the four Gospels had all been handed down as genuine from the apostolic age, and had everywhere accompanied our religion as it spread through the world.





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